THE ORIGIN OF *PORNEIA* REFLECTED IN I CORINTHIANS 5-6 AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE FUNDAMENTAL ORIENTATION OF THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
Baylor University
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
William David Moore

Waco, Texas
August 1978

UMI

APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION:

(signed) H. J. Flanders Jr. chm, admin. comm.

APPROVED BY THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE:

(signed) H. J. Flanders Jr.

E. L. Dwyer

Harold W. Osborne

APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE COUNCIL:

(signed) William G. Toland

DATE July 5, 1978

UMI

ABSTRACT

Since the time of F. C. Baur, the understanding of the fundamental orientation of the Corinthian church has been of critical importance to the interpretation of I Corinthians. Most nineteenth-century interpreters followed, modified, or expanded Baur's basic contention that an antithesis existed in Corinth between Pauline Christianity and Petrine Christianity. Although Baur's hypothesis has been disregarded generally, he did understand the Corinthian church in an essentially Jewish setting.

With the rise of Gnostic concerns in the twentieth century, a sharp reaction to Baur has taken place. The tendency, especially in Germany, has been to isolate Gnostic parallels in Corinth so that the schismatics can be called "Gnostic libertines." Many interpreters view the congregation as a Gentile group and explain the infiltration of Gnostic doctrine and ethics on that basis. The existence of such a developed Gnostic system in first-century Corinth cannot be proven, however, for the earliest evidence for such a developed system comes from the second century.

Almost all study into the background of the Corinthian congregation has focused upon the factions evident in I Cor. 1-3. Yet most scholars are convinced

that there was an earlier letter of Paul to Corinth which is mentioned in I Cor. 5:9. This previous letter had only one known subject, namely the relationship of believers to fornicators. Following the founding of the congregation as recorded in Acts 18, the first and probably earliest source of opposition was sexual immorality. Thus, any indications of the background of fornication in Corinth, particularly its justifications and manifestations, would shed important insight into the nature of the congregation as it faced this early source of difficulty.

Acts 18 describes the early congregation as a composite of pure Jews and proselytes to Judaism in varying degrees. The previous letter, if partially extant in II Cor. 6:14-7:1, correlates with this early description in that Paul speaks to those who are trained in Judaism. The fornication passages in I Cor. 5-6 do not dictate a Gentile audience and are not undergirded by Gnostic terms and thought patterns. Instead, the use of terms, thoughts, arguments, allusions, and references which would be familiar only to a Jewish audience leads to the conclusion that Paul is dealing with a predominantly Jewish-oriented group. Paul's background, of course, colors his argumentation; but there are indications that he assumed agreement and understanding from his readers.

To interpret the whole of I Corinthians in light of Hellenistic Judaism is to understand a group struggling with their relationship to Jewish law. Because of an eschatological misunderstanding evident in I Cor. 4, these Christians had begun justifying their fornication in terms of freedom from moral law. The body was considered unimportant since it must not have a share in the present eschatological reign.

To understand I Corinthians in light of a Hellenistic-Jewish milieu is to take the evidence of Acts seriously. Such a conclusion reacts against the over-emphasis on factions in the church, as well as against the modern tendency to identify a developed Gnosticism in Corinth. It integrates the epistle into a more understandable whole as it explains the thrust of the arguments against an esoteric Jewish background of those confused about eschatology, the importance of their bodies, and their relationship to Jewish law.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iii

PREFACE viii

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION 1

- Background 1
- Judaizers 3
- Gnosticism 11
- Hellenistic Judaism 19
  - Reaction to Gnosticism 19
  - Evidence from Acts 21
  - Transition in Schlatter 25
  - Implications in Hebrews 28
  - Implications in II Corinthians 32
- A Change in Paul's Message 34
- Conclusion 41

II. GNOSTICISM AS A SOURCE FOR SEXUAL LIBERTINISM 44

- Definition 44
- Sources 47
- Dating 48
- Origins 50
- Major Tenets 55
- Gnostic Ethics 60
- Gnostic Sexual Libertinism 63
- Gnostic Libertinism in Corinth 69
- Conclusion 75

III. HELLENISTIC JUDAISM AS A SOURCE FOR SEXUAL LIBERTINISM 79

- The Dispersion 79
- Unity in Dispersion 84
- Traditional Development of Hellenistic-Jewish Communities 86
- A Divergent Development 89
- Philo Judaeus 94
- A Proposed Reconstruction in Corinth 99

IV. TEXTUAL EVIDENCE FOR THE APPROPRIATE BACKGROUND 108

Introduction 108
The Previous Letter 111
I Cor. 6:12-20 118
  Exegesis 118
  Implications 137
I Cor. 5 148
  Exegesis 148
  Implications 159
Other Texts in I Corinthians 163
Conclusion 165

V. HELLENISTIC JUDAISM AS AN INTERPRETIVE KEY TO I CORINTHIANS 169

Introduction 169
Brief Survey of I Corinthians 177
  Introduction (1:1-9) 177
  Party Strife (1:10-4:5) 178
  Overly-realized Eschatology (4:6-21). . . . 184
  Pagan Law Courts (6:1-11) 184
  Matters Related to Marriage (7:1-40) . . . 186
  Meat Sacrificed to Idols (8:1-11:1) 190
  Matters of Worship (11:2-14:40) 195
  The Resurrection of the Body (15:1-58) . . 200
  Conclusion (16:1-24) 203
Concluding Remarks 204

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 210

PREFACE

Since my first scholarly introduction to I Corinthians, my interest in this work with its specific moral applications has grown immensely. The significance of "setting the stage" and understanding the background was immediately evident, but its impact upon interpretation of the epistle appeared more determinative than many commentators were willing to admit. In addition, with the rise of increasing Gnostic concerns, certain assumptions were being made by some interpreters that seemed to contradict the evidence as recorded in Acts and to change the whole thrust of interpretation. Thus, my interest in the background involved continued to develop.

Many commentators have sought to identify the setting of I Corinthians in a general way. The main concern has been to identify the opposition that had developed in Corinth. Some commentators have even isolated specific sections and have sought to identify the milieu out of which the particular situation arose. Birger A. Pearson, for example, has written a provocative dissertation which focuses on the pneumatikos-psuchikos terminology in the epistle.[1]

---

[1] Birger Albert Pearson, The Pneumatikos-Psuchikos

Since the focus of most investigations has been on chapters 1-4, a thorough investigation of the πορνεία passages has not been made to this author's satisfaction. Yet, if the "previous letter" theory[1] is accurate, then πορνεία is the original or earliest source of opposition developing in Corinth after the time referred to in Acts 18. Its background and a reconstruction of its influence on the congregation would offer much insight into the development of the opposition before the writing of I Corinthians. Such is the purpose of this study in its investigation of two primary πορνεία passages, I Cor. 5 and I Cor. 6:12-20.

For the purposes of this study, I Corinthians, and specifically I Cor. 5 and I Cor. 6:12-20, will be the focal material. No attempt will be made to trace the opposition later in time so as to include II Corinthians. The investigation deals with the historical background of πορνεία in the Corinthian congregation and its implications for the interpretation of I Corinthians. This study will not be concerned with the unity of I Corinthians[2] or with Pauline chronology. The chronology of John Knox,[3] John C.

Terminology in I Corinthians: A Study in the Theology of the Corinthian Opponents of Paul and Its Relation to Gnosticism (Missoula, Mont.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1968).

[1] See pp. 111ff.

[2] For an excellent discussion of integrity, see Werner Georg Kümmel, re-ed., Introduction to the New Testament, founded by Paul Feine and Johannes Behm, trans. A. J. Mattill, Jr., 14th rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), pp. 202-205.

[3] John Knox, Chapters in a Life of Paul (New York: Abingdon Press, 1950), pp. 47-107.

Hurd, Jr.,[1] and others who reject the secondary evidence of Acts will be alluded to; but a more traditional chronology will be assumed. The epistle will be treated as a unity, and dated during the middle of the sixth decade of first century A.D. In addition, although evidence from Acts will be used to support the Hellenistic-Jewish argument, this study will not attempt to evaluate the reliability of the Acts source.

This study cannot prove or disprove the existence of early Gnosticism in Corinth. No attempt will be made to delineate all of the distinctions among "gnosis," "pre-gnosticism," "proto-gnosticism," "Gnosticism," and "Gnostic."[2] The Gnostic arguments will be explained in Chapter II using the term "Gnosticism" to describe a developed system. The term "pre-gnosticism" will be employed to describe patterns of thought containing elements later incorporated into Gnosticism. The use of "pre-gnosticism" is not intended to indicate a conviction that the particular pattern of thought in view developed ultimately into a form of Gnosticism. Thus, "gnostic" will be used in a broad manner to describe patterns of thought that do not necessarily represent integrated systems.

---

[1] John Coolidge Hurd, Jr., The Origin of I Corinthians (New York: Seabury Press, 1965), pp. 3-42.

[2] Robert McLachlan Wilson discusses the ambiguity of Gnostic references in his article, "How Gnostic were the Corinthians?" New Testament Studies 19 (Oct. 1972):65-74.

Gratitude should be expressed to the members of Deer Park Baptist Church of Newport News, Virginia, who provided the encouragement and financial support needed for the completion of this task. Their insight in voting that I, their pastor, take two days off each week has enabled me to hold down a job and maintain a family relationship, while completing this research. The contribution of a loving wife, who, in the course of her own academic accomplishments, offered continual encouragement and support should also be mentioned.

My dissertation committee, and particularly its chairman, Dr. H. J. Flanders, Jr., should be acknowledged for **its** contribution to this work. The attitude of encouragement and the promptness of help provided consistent motivation through the duration of the project. My appreciation should also be expressed for the use of Union Theological Seminary Library in Richmond, Virginia, which provided most of the resources for this study.

All the biblical quotations in English, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New American Standard Version.[1] The Greek text of the New Testament is the United Bible Society text.[2]

---

[1] New American Standard Bible, reference ed. (Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, 1971).

[2] Kurt Aland, et al., eds., The Greek New Testament, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, West Germany: Württemberg Bible Society, 1968).

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The interpretation of I Corinthians hinges to a large extent upon the background into which the letter is set. In estimating the situation in the Corinthian church preceding the writing of I Corinthians, scholars have relied mainly on the descriptive information contained within the letters and their general understanding of the historical perspective of that period. Interpreters of I Corinthians have long recognized that this particular Pauline epistle presupposes important problems that have originated within the setting.

When Ferdinand Christian Baur published in 1831 his famous article on the "Christ-party" in the Corinthian church,[1] he was making another contribution to an already debated subject. His article, however, is generally considered to have inaugurated a new era in New Testament scholarship.[1] His conclusions dominated the nineteenth-century understanding of I Corinthians, as his successors only expanded and modified his basic theory.

---

[1] Ferdinand Christian Baur, "Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des paulinischen und petrinischen Christentums in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom," Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie 5 (1831):61-206; also in Ferdinand Christian Baur, Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben, ed. Klaus Scholder, 5 vols. (Holzboog: Stuttgart & Bad Canstatt, 1963), 1:1-146.

A prevailing interest in Gnosticism has led scholars in the twentieth century to deny Baur's basic contention and to stress the Gnostic character of Paul's Corinthian opponents. This understanding has been especially prevalent in Germany, where it reached a logical conclusion in the work of Walter Schmithals,[2] who advanced this theory by including a description of the Gnostic theology in Corinth.

The designation of Paul's opponents in Corinth as "Gnostics" has not gone unchallenged. Though maintaining a wholesale denial of Baur's basic proposition, other scholars in this century have moved toward a conclusion that the source of trouble was rooted in Hellenistic-Jewish thought. This does not mean, however, that all modern scholarship of I Corinthians can be divided into these two competing schools of thought. Several individualistic theories have been proposed to explain the cause of opposition. For example, one modern scholar[3] has developed an elaborate theory which identifies the source of trouble as a change in Paul himself--in the message that he preached to the Corinthians at various intervals.

---

[1] In his Introduction to *Vol. I: Historische-kritische Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament mit einer Einführung von Ernst Käsemann* of Ibid., 1:xxv, Ernst Käsemann says that with Baur, critical biblical scholarship in the modern period had its true beginning.

[2] Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians*, trans. John Steely (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971).

[3] Hurd, *The Origin of I Corinthians*.

Commentators find it impossible to exegete this epistle without at least tentatively adopting one alternative concerning the nature of the Corinthian opposition. This letter presupposes specific situations, teachings, and resultant questions, which must be rooted in some fundamental misconception of the gospel message. Before attempting to understand the particular libertine ethic in question, a background into the history of various theories which explain the fundamental cause of opposition in Corinth would prove helpful.

Judaizers

When Ferdinand Christian Baur joined the faculty at Tübingen in 1826 as full professor of theology, he brought with him a rich heritage in ancient history, philosophy, and religion.[1] Some of his first efforts at Tübingen, however, were directed toward New Testament studies, resulting in several articles published in the 1830's. The most important article was the 1831 analysis of the conflict between Paulinizing and Judaizing parties in Corinth. Here he developed for the first time his famous thesis that the history of primitive Christian communities was marked by the initial antithesis and then gradual reconciliation between Judaizing and Paulinizing interpretations of the gospel. Baur used the specific issue of Paul's opposition in Corinth to expose his understanding of the historical dialectic in primitive Christianity. He suggested in his 1831 article that New Testament writings should be understood and criticized according to the theological and literary tendencies which they exhibit. Emphasizing the emergence of Christianity as a synthesis of Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity, he attempted in various other essays to demonstrate that the early Church was split up into Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians and to prove a Jewish attitude on the part of the schismatics at Corinth.

---

[1] Peter C. Hodgson, ed. and trans., Ferdinand Christian Baur on the Writing of Church History, A Library of Protestant Thought, ed. John Dillenberger et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 3-4.

In later years, Baur repeatedly designated the 1831 article as the foundation of his total conception of the development of primitive Christianity. He isolated one phenomenon in the Corinthian epistles which he critically analyzed. The conclusion of his analysis was that between Paul and the original apostles, represented by Peter, there existed a serious antithesis. There was conflict between a Jewish-Christian legalistic understanding of Christianity and the Pauline evangelical understanding. The results of this research dominated scholarly opinion on I Corinthians for many years. Thus, it can be said that the modern study of I Corinthians properly begins with Ferdinand Christian Baur in 1831.

UMI

Baur viewed Corinth as the first place where Christianity had been applied to the classic spirit of ancient Greece, and he considered it inevitable that a peculiar phenomenon would arise in the first application to classic Greeks. This would be especially true in a city where Greek culture and Greek sensuality were so intimately connected. Baur emphasized the personal relationship of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian church. The church was, as Paul himself says,[1] a child begotten by him and lovingly fostered, but a child also in need of his fatherly correction and educating care. The same type of Judaizing opponents, against whom Paul wrote the earlier epistle to the Galatian church, introduced a new and most disturbing element into the life of the Corinthian church, while it was still in its first stage of development. Baur described these opponents as follows:

> But these opponents now appear in a more polished and refined guise; they have less of the Jewish national tone; they seem to have perceived that they must take up a different line in this altogether Greek Church from that which they had taken up in the churches of Asia Minor; or it may be that their religious views had made some progress, and that they had become less rigid. Their opposition to Pauline Christianity no longer proceeds from the purely Jewish standpoint, where circumcision is the great thing to be insisted on; it has become Christian, and the main point urged is the true Christian notion of apostolic authority; but it has gained in intensity by applying itself to this one principle, and is all the more personally dangerous to the Apostle.[2]

---

[1] I Cor. 4:15.

[2] Ferdinand Christian Baur, Paul, the Apostle of

Baur took his starting point from I Cor. 1:11-12 where it is said that some Corinthian Christians were calling themselves after Paul and others after Apollos, Cephas, or Christ. Although the Apostle deals with a series of subjects which had special interest for a church still in its infancy, the matter of primary concern was the party spirit which had evolved through the influence of the Judaizing opponents. Baur easily identified the party of Paul to be those who had remained most faithful to the Apostle. This group constituted the overwhelming majority. A party of Apollos was also understandable to Baur:

> Apollos had immediately succeeded the Apostle at Corinth as his lieutenant in the cause of the Gospel, and if, as is related of him, Acts xviii, 24, he had attained great eminence in Alexandrine culture and knowledge of the Scriptures, it may easily be understood how there might be many persons in Corinth, who, owing to the attractiveness of his discourses for the Greek mind, became so fond of him that they even preferred him in some measure to the Apostle Paul.[1]

Baur did not believe, however, that this party was the source of the conflict in Corinth, because he understood Apollos to be closely in line with the teaching of Paul. Baur felt that there must be something more in the situation of the Corinthian church to explain how this preference for

---

Jesus Christ: His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine, rev. Eduard Zeller, trans. A. Menzies, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1875), 1:259.

[1] Ibid., 1:260.

Apollos could have been construed by Paul as a subject for anxiety, and he found the clue to the true cause of schism in the names of the other two parties.

The name of Peter suggested to Baur a natural opponent to Paul. As far as historical documentation, Peter had never been to Corinth. Under the authority of Peter's name, however, Baur believed that a Jewish-Christian element had been introduced into this church, which consisted almost entirely of Gentile Christians. In this sense, Paul affixed the name of Cephas or Peter to a group. Since the existing epistles to the Corinthians contain almost none of the references to traditional doctrines of Judaizers found in Galatians and Romans,[1] Baur felt that he had isolated the Judaism of Paul's opponents in a new form. The Cephas-party disappears as an altogether distinct point of view, since Baur identified the Cephas-party with the Christ-party.

The identification of this Christ-party was critical to Baur's theory. Baur held that there were really two parties: one, those of Paul and Apollos, and the other composed of the Petrinists and Christines. Baur explained the distinction in this way:

> In view of the well-known relation in which Paul and Peter, one the Apostle to the Gentiles, the other to the Jews, really stood towards each other, or at least the relation in which they were thought to stand towards

---

[1] I.e., the absolute value of the Mosaic law and the necessity of its observance for salvation; cf. Gal. 3 and Rom. 2-3.

> each other by the chief parties of the early Christian Church, there can be no doubt that their chief difference lay between the two sects which called themselves after Paul and Cephas.[1]

Since Baur could find nothing in the contents of the two Corinthian epistles to show any important difference between Paul and Apollos, he could not conceive of the difference being so essential or so connected with doctrine as to prevent the two parties from being one party against the party of Peter. In a similar way, the Cephas-party could have been related to the Christ-party. In fact, Baur considered them essentially one and the same party.[2] Jewish Christians who used the name of Peter proclaimed themselves to be the true Christians and denied that the Gentile Christians were real Christians at all. This was what the Paul-party and the Apollos-party would seek to refute. If these Christines were Jewish Christians, there was no doubt in Baur's mind that they formed one party with the adherents of Peter. Due to the amount of material in the two Corinthian epistles devoted to a vindication of Paul's apostolic authority, Baur concluded that the main point of attack from the Cephas and Christ-party was in this area.[1]

---

[1] Baur, Paul, 1:264.

[2] In a footnote to his The Church History of the First Three Centuries, trans. A. Menzies, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1878-79), 1:61, F. C. Baur wrote:

> "I am still of the opinion that the only view of the Corinthian parties which will explain Paul's Epistles and the nature of the parties at Corinth generally, is that the party of Cephas and the so-called party of Christ were essentially one and the same."

Baur's fundamental insight was that the thoroughgoing quest for the historical beginnings of Christianity does not lead one to a unity or a harmony, as early scholars had maintained, but to an antithesis or a polemic. From this historical context, he interpreted I Corinthians. Baur has been and will continue to be a highly controversial figure, both as an historical theologian and as a New Testament interpreter. Since the weaknesses of his views have been pointed out and will become increasingly evident in this work, there may be need to point out his strength. Nils Dahl has attempted to define the main strengths of Baur's view of the background of I Corinthians:

> On the basis of his theory, Baur was able to account for the fact that in I Corinthians 1-4 Paul does not deal with a variety of parties, but in 'this first apologetic section' gives a justification of his apostolic authority and ministry. Further, he was able to trace a continuity between I Corinthians 1-4 and the later controversy of which II Corinthians, especially chapters 10-13, is evidence. More especially, he could relate the enigmatic slogan 'I belong to Christ' to Paul's remark in II Corinthians 10:7: 'If any one is confident that he is Christ's, so are we.' Finally, Baur was able to integrate the Corinthian controversy into a comprehensible view of the earliest history of Christianity which he found to be determined by the tension between Paulinists and Petrine Judaizers.[2]

---

[1] Baur, Paul, 1:266.

[2] Nils A. Dahl, "Paul and the Church at Corinth According to I Corinthians 1:10-4:21," in William Reuben Farmer, Charles Francis Digby Moule, and Richard R. Niebuhr, eds., Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), pp. 313-14.

The importance of F. C. Baur's perspective must be clearly understood, for almost all research in I Corinthians since his time has focused upon approval, modification, or rejection of his theory. The arbitrary reduction of the four slogans to two parties, for example, has caused numerous modifications of Baur's theory, even within his own school. Other pupils and successors of Baur have pointed out that certain features in Paul's characterization of the opponents are simply irreconcilable with an extremely Judaistic point of view. Thus, as D. Georgi has humorously pointed out, "Die Reaktion auf Baurs Programmschrift glich der eines stiches in ein Wespennest."[1]

Walter Schmithals attempts to isolate an intermediate stage between a strictly Baur approach (Judaistic) and his own approach (Gnostic). Schmithals says that successors of Baur

> . . . assumed that there was in Corinth a second, moderated Jewish-Christian tendency against which also Paul was contending. To this second party then occasionally a more or less rationalizing or gnosticizing tendency was attributed, unless one chose to make a third group responsible for this tendency.[2]

This illustrates the fact that later modifications still maintained the assertion that the predominant opposition to Paul in Corinth had Judaistic features. This strong influence made the early assertion that Paul's opponents were non-Judaistic pneumatics of no account. Near the end of the nineteenth century, most scholars still regarded Baur's assertion as convincing;[1] and even as late as 1924, Windisch could describe this opinion as being predominant until quite recently.[2] As Stephen Neill has suggested,

---

[1] Dieter Georgi, Die Gegner des Paulus im 2 Korintherbrief: Studien zur religrosēn Propaganda in der Spätantike (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukircher Verlag, 1964), p. 9.

[2] Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth, p. 117.

> . . . up to a point the reputation of Baur was well deserved by his immense industry, by his steadfast refusal to take anything for granted--this is the starting point of any serious critical study--by his insistence that every book of the New Testament must be considered in relation to the historical circumstances of its origin in so far as that can be ascertained, and by certain brilliant insights of permanent validity.[3]

Gnosticism

A complete break with Baur's thesis and conclusions was facilitated in the early twentieth century by an interest in Gnosticism.[4] This new interest posited a contradictory alternative to Baur's approach in that Gnostic teachings were identified as the source of trouble in Corinth. Some scholars of this persuasion have developed at length possible connections between Paul's letter and various Gnostic concepts. Paul's letter then is construed as a reaction to Gnosticism within the Corinthian congregation.

---

[1] Cf. Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Parts V and VI: The Epistles to the Corinthians, trans. D. Douglas Bannermann and David Hunter, rev. and ed. William P. Dickson, translation rev. and ed. William P. Dickson and William Stewart, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1878-81), 2:129.

[2] Hans Ludwig Windisch, Der zweite Korintherbrief: Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament, begründet von Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1924), p. 24.

[3] Stephen Neill, The Interpretation of the New Testament: 1861-1961: The Firth Lectures, 1962 (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 27.

[4] This term will be defined and the cause of this interest will be explained in Chapter II.

Recent studies have shown that the distinction between Judaism and surrounding cultures was not as clear as was once supposed and that there was some intermingling of Greek and Jewish thought. Elements of popular Hellenistic thought could penetrate easily into the thought of Diaspora Judaism. Some interpreters have suggested that a developed Gnosticism had filtered into the Corinthian church and that Paul was confronting this system in his correspondence with the church.

Since there is no firm evidence of Gnosticism in Paul's day, those who favor this view use an indirect approach to make their case. The usual approach has been to extrapolate backward in time from later documents which describe a developed Gnosticism. By such a process, hypothetical reconstructions are possible; but their accuracy is difficult to gauge. Working from a non-Gnostic source, such as the New Testament, scholars who hold this view attempt to isolate examples of probable interaction with Gnosticism.

One significant area of documentation is vocabulary. Much research has been done to show the presence of Gnostic terminology in the New Testament, and specifically in I Corinthians. Since the resul[illegible] this research proves no more than that words current in New Testament times came later to serve as technical terms for Gnostic thought, it is

UMI

necessary for this school of interpreters to demonstrate a definite Gnostic content in those words and thought complexes shared by later Gnosticism and the New Testament. Such evidence which is difficult to obtain[1] would prove the existence of Gnosticism in both periods.

Wilhelm Lütgert[2] is given credit[3] for being the first to effectively present the counter-thesis that the opponents were spiritualistic enthusiasts, an early type of libertinistic Gnostics. Paul's chief opponents at Corinth were said to be the Christ-party, a group of Gnostic pneumatics. This group with its slogan of freedom sought to counteract Paul; and thus, it was against this party that Paul's attack was directed.

As the pioneer advocate of this opposing view, Lütgert developed his theory without seriously misrepresenting the position of the Corinthian heretics.[1] Some who followed Lütgert developed more authoritatively the Gnostic character of the opponents. Those who have accepted and expanded this position include Bousset, Bultmann, and Dinkler.[2]

---

[1] R. P. Casey, in his "Gnosis, Gnosticism, and the New Testament," in William David Davies and David Daube, eds. in honor of Charles Harold Dodd, The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology (Cambridge: University Press, 1956), p. 79, says with regard to literature of New Testament times that Paul's use of certain terms ". . . reveals a terminology common to pagan and Christian authors of the period but with transparent differences of sense."

[2] Wilhelm Lütgert, Freiheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister in Korinth: Ein Beitrag zur Charackteristik der Christus Partei, Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie, vol. 12 (Gutersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1908).

[3] E.g., by Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth, p. 117; by Hans Conzelmann, I Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, trans. James W. Leitch, bib. and ref. James W. Dunkly, ed. George W. MacRae, Hermeneia--A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Jr., Helmut Koester et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 14; and by Edwin M. Yamauchi, Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Study of the Proposed Evidences (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), p. 79.

The philologist Richard Reitzenstein[3] went further than Lütgert. He derived from his study of the epistle a picture of Paul as a Gnostic, which led him to declare that the Corinthians also were Gnostics. Under the influence of Gnostic ideas, the apostle Paul at times even verged on the enthusiasm he attacked. Although the presentation is somewhat underdeveloped, Reitzenstein explained both Paul's terminology and the Corinthian piety against a background of Hellenistic religions, mystery religions, and Gnosticism.

The view that the background for Paul's opponents at Corinth was Gnosticism comes to full bloom in the person of Walter Schmithals. His elaborate arguments set forth the thesis that in Corinth there prevailed not only an enthusiasm of a general kind, but also a thoroughly developed Gnostic system. His theories about the influence of Gnosticism on the Corinthian church have influenced modern interpretation of I Corinthians tremendously. In his book, Gnosticism in Corinth, he attempts to show that it is hopeless from the outset to demonstrate that the sexual libertinism, the eating of meat sacrificed to idols, the pneumatic endowment, as well as the stressing of Gnosis, are more readily derived from Judaism than from the Hellenistic manifestation of Gnosticism. Schmithals then advances both to show that Paul's opponents at Corinth were Gnostic in nature and to reconstruct the doctrines of these opponents.[1]

---

[1] Schmithals, in his Gnosticism in Corinth, p. 121, accuses Lütgert of a lack of "necessary sharpness in characterizing Paul's opponents."

[2] Wilhelm Bousset, Hauptprobleme der gnosis (Gottinger: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1907); Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans. Kendrick Grobel, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951); Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings, s.v. "First Letter to the Corinthians," by Erich Dinkler.

[3] Richard Reitzenstein, Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1927), pp. 333-93.

The first step for Schmithals, of course, is a complete rejection and rebuttal of Baur's basic thesis. Schmithals proceeds not merely to modify Baur's work, as others had done, but to deny totally its validity. This he does in no uncertain terms. He opens a section on "The Untenability of Baur's Thesis" with this strong paragraph:

> Now there is probably no assertion in theological-critical research that has been defended with greater certainty and wider distribution and at the same time with less evidence than the assertion that in the Corinthian epistles Paul is dealing with Judaizers. The heretics in Corinth are supposed to have been Judaizers although Paul does not slip into anti-Judaistic polemics with a single word; although not a single passage in the epistles allows us to conclude with certainty or even with some probability a Judaistic attitude of those who have invaded Corinth; although it is conceded that these false teachers have even neglected the proclamation of their false teaching in the decisive points; although they would have had every

---

[1] Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth, pp. 117-24.

> reason--especially after the experiences in Galatia--to win the community for their views before Paul's intervention; although Paul nonetheless polemicizes in several letters . . . against their false teaching, which must therefore have been well enough known to him; although this polemic exhibits features which certainly rule out the Judaistic character of the opponents; although one then would have to regard Paul simply as obtuse if even after his personal sojourn in Corinth he did not perceive the actual intentions of his enemies; although it has long been recognized that in Jesus' time Judaism was a religion so much caught up in syncretism that "Hebrews" could also disseminate all sorts of other tendencies than purely Pharisaic, "Judaizing." . . . Although one has to wonder then how anyone could even get the idea that Judaizers could have emerged in Corinth, there is nevertheless no doubt in many minds that there were Judaizers.[1]

Schmithals concludes this discussion by stating that the thesis that Paul is dealing with Judaizers must be abandoned without reservation, ". . . in whatever form and with whatever dilution it may be proposed."[2] Although Schmithals is extremely bold in his argumentation, he does recognize that most recent research has tended toward a Jewish standpoint for Paul's opponents.

As will be shown in the following pages, Schmithals seeks a strong exegetical basis for his views and attempts to document Gnostic tendencies from the Corinthian epistles. His thesis is that there was only one battlefront in Corinth and that Paul was asserting his stance against this one heresy. In this one point, he agrees with F. C. Baur. Schmithals attempts to show through the heretical theology in Corinth that this was a genuine Gnosticism. Although he emphatically denies that a Gnostic Judaism existed in Corinth, he does trace the existence of a Jewish Gnosticism;[1] and he proves the significance of the adjectival reverse by providing a thoroughgoing exposition of Paul's opponents in both I and II Corinthians as Jewish Gnostics. Schmithals finds within the two canonical letters six different letters: two in I Corinthians and four in II Corinthians. He finds that the one battlefront, which becomes especially prominent in II Cor. 10-13, is Jewish Christ Gnosticism. The Jewish character of this Gnosticism was expressed by the terminology employed, by the use of the Old Testament, and the decided weakening of the cosmic dualism.[2]

---

[1] Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth, pp. 118-19.

[2] Ibid., p. 120.

Although Schmithals acknowledges the Jewish background for the opponents' nationality, he refuses to find any trace of Judaism causing the controversy. Instead, he insists that Gnosticism and not Judaism is the consistent source of trouble in the church, as is revealed in all of the Corinthian correspondence; and he declares that ". . . only one of the two is possible: Judaism or Gnosticism."[3] With his determined conviction, Schmithals seeks to expose the theology of these full-fledged Gnostics at Corinth.

In a different way, Ulrich Wilckens[4] has also tried to reconstruct the doctrines of the Gnostics at Corinth. He argues that certain expressions used by Paul have infiltrated from Gnosticism. His main thesis is the contention that the Christology of the heretics developed out of a Jewish personification of Sophia or Wisdom. Wilckens considers Paul's use of the term ψυχικός as a technical Gnostic term and his reference to the "deep things of God"[1] as typical of Gnosticism. For Wilckens, even ". . . the mention of gnosis in I Corinthians 8:1ff. is an unmistakable allusion to Gnosticism."[2]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 387. [2] Ibid., p. 293. [3] Ibid., p. 294.

[4] Ulrich Wilckens, Weisheit und Torheit: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu I Kor. 1 und 2 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959).

Presupposing the existence of a developed Gnosticism in the first century A.D., these scholars have traced, defined, and described the Gnostic character of Paul's opponents at Corinth. The effect of the influence in this century may be seen in Conzelmann's recent commentary, where he describes the view as ". . . widespread today, that the Corinthians are Gnostics."[3] This view is most common in Germany today as illustrated by a recent New Testament introduction by Willi Marxen. He claims, "The opponents can certainly--though indirectly, by the inquiry that is made and the scandals that have arisen--be identified as Gnostics."[4] He interprets the way Paul deals with the varied problems in I Corinthians

---

[1] I Cor. 2:10.

[2] Yamauchi, Pre-Christian Gnosticism, p. 39.

[3] Conzelmann, I Corinthians, p. 14.

[4] Willi Marxen, Introduction to the New Testament: An Approach to Its Problems, trans. G. Buswell (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 75.

UMI

as an attempt to repel the Gnostic influence that has penetrated the church in Corinth. In spite of the variety of themes the letter presents, Marxen and others see a consistent opposing force in Gnostic teachings and tendencies. Likewise, Kümmel in his standard work on the New Testament considers Paul to be confronting basically one opposing front in Corinth, namely a Gnostic one.[1]

Hellenistic Judaism

Reaction to Gnosticism

In recent years there has been an increasing trend to reconsider the Corinthian epistles as emerging from within an essentially Jewish milieu.[2] This approach challenges the assumption of a Gentile congregation at Corinth in favor of the assumption of a dominant Jewish element. Such an understanding is fostered by recent tendencies to interpret Paul against an esoteric rather than a Gentile-Gnostic background. There seems to be a growing belief that the lines of demarcation between Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism are less than clear-cut, as formerly thought. As C. A. H. Guignebert has observed:

> We can no longer doubt that there actually existed a Jewish gnosis from which the various sects drew their nourishment. In all probability, these sects sincerely believed themselves to be entirely orthodox with regard

---

[1] Kümmel, re-ed., Introduction to the New Testament, p. 202.

[2] Cf. Von Ernst Bammel, "Herkunft und Funktion der Traditionselemente in I. Kor. 15. 1-11," Theologische Zeitschrift 11 (Nov.-Dec. 1955):401-419.

> to the Torah; nevertheless they occupied themselves with esoteric doctrines which fostered their illusion by seeming to be in accord with genuine legalism, while they falsified its spirit by interpretations wholly alien to it.[1]

In applying this approach of a Hellenistic-Jewish background to I Corinthians, evidence has been gathered from a logical rejection of Gnostic arguments,[2] from information gleaned from Acts, and from an interpretation of the epistle itself within a Jewish framework.

The existence of a mature type of Gnosticism in Corinth has been questioned by many.[3] Robert McLachlan Wilson is willing to speak of ". . . opponents of a more Gnostic type at Corinth, with perhaps a Jewish Christian element which may have entered into the situation at a later stage," as distinct from Judaizers in Galatia ". . . with perhaps some 'Gnostic' leanings."[4] G. W. MacRae is hesitant to even label the Corinthian heretics as "Gnostics."[1] Other scholars deny that Gnosticism was even involved at Corinth. Conzelmann argues that the fact that Paul presupposed that the Corinthians shared his confession of faith refutes ". . . the thesis that the Corinthians had a gnostic Christology. . . They are not gnostics, but spirit-enthusiasts."[2] This position is bluntly summarized by A. D. Nock:

---

[1] Charles Alfred Honoré Guignebert, The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus, trans. S. H. Hooke, The History of Civilization, ed. C. K. Ogden (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1939), p. 203.

[2] The arguments for Gnosticism in Corinth and the corresponding rebuttals will be covered more fully in Chapters II and III.

[3] Among those who question the Gnosticism of Paul's opponents are Charles Kingsley Barrett, in his "Paul's Opponents in II Corinthians," New Testament Studies 17 (1971):233-54; Hans Conzelmann, in his "On the Analysis of the Confessional Formula in I Corinthians 15:3-5," Interpretation 20 (1966):24; Thomas Walter Manson, in his "St. Paul in Ephesus: (3) The Corinthian Correspondence," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 26 (1941):101-120; Arthur Darby Nock, in his "Gnosticism," Harvard Theological Review 57 (1964): 277; and Wilson, "How Gnostic were the Corinthians?" pp. 65-74.

[4] Robert McLachlan Wilson, Gnosis and the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 55.

> The plain truth is that you could not have found anyone in Corinth to direct you to a Gnostic church; the overwhelming probability is that there was no such thing. It is at most possible that here (as certainly happened in Colossae) individual Christians came from or came into contact with esoteric Judaism.[3]

Evidence from Acts

Supporters of a Hellenistic-Jewish basis find much evidence in the book of Acts. Acts is a secondary source in the study of Paul's life and churches. Yet apart from the Pauline epistles, the Lucan Acts is the only serious source available for the life of Paul. John Knox[4] has challenged its accuracy in relation to Pauline chronology; but, while acknowledging doubt as to its reliability, there seems to be no conclusive reason for not accepting basic information from Acts about Paul's visit to Corinth.

---

[1] New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967 ed., s.v. "Gnosis, Christian," by George W. MacRae; cf. his Review of Gnosticism in Corinth, by Walter Schmithals, in Interpretation 26 (1972): 489-91.

[2] Conzelmann, "Confessional Formula," p. 24.

[3] Nock, "Gnosticism," p. 277.

[4] Knox, Life of Paul, pp. 61-73; cf. John Knox, "The Pauline Chronology," Journal of Biblical Literature 58 (1939): 15-29.

According to Acts,[1] in visiting Corinth Paul followed his customary practices of affiliating himself with the Jewish community and of teaching in the synagogue. Paul lived with two Jews, Priscilla and Aquilla; and he argued "in the synagogue every Sabbath," as he attempted to persuade "Jews and Greeks."[2] The implication here is that this means Jews and Greeks in various relationships to the synagogue. After the arrival of Silas and Timothy, there was a reaction to Paul's preaching which caused him to leave the synagogue and turn to the Gentiles. Paul went then to the nearby house of Titius Justus,[3] a Gentile who was a σεβομένου τὸν θεόν, a "worshiper of God."[4] The exact relation of this man to the synagogue is unknown,[5] and the meaning of the shift "to the Gentiles"[6] is unclear. Acts 18:8 indicates that Paul's preaching was still related to the Jews, and one might assume that his preaching became simply indiscriminate. Crispus, the leader of the synagogue and certainly a full-blooded Jew, was converted, along with many other Corinthians. There is no reason to suppose that this would not include "worshipers of God," proselytes, and Gentiles. At any rate, Paul's success was sufficient to bring the Jews to the point of disturbing the peace. This situation is reminiscent of the situation in Thessalonica[1] in which Paul preached to Jews, proselytes, worshipers of God, and women in the synagogue. At Thessalonica, some Jews "along with a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks, and a number of the leading women"[2] joined Paul. Like the Jews of Thessalonica, the Jews of Corinth were disturbed by Paul's success. Whereas Paul would accept converts upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ, the Jews required converts to go through years of catechism and never admitted women to full participation. Thus, the Jews were greatly angered by Paul's effectiveness; and they brought Paul before the pagan proconsul Gallio. He insisted that Paul's teaching was Jewish; and therefore, the conflict was the jurisdiction of the Jewish courts rather than his own.

---

[1] Acts 18:1-17. [2] Acts 18:4.

[3] This is the preferred reading of the United Bible Society text.

[4] Acts 18:7.

[5] Various opinions are held concerning the relation of these "worshipers of God" to the synagogue. For one theory concerning the relation of Titius Justus to the Corinthian synagogue, see Josephine Massingberd Ford, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians or the First Epistle to the Hebrews?" The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 28 (1966):403.

[6] Acts 18:6.

The importance of this evidence with regard to the composition of the Corinthian congregation lies in the Jewish nature of the original church. The first nucleus of a Christian community at Corinth consisted of pure Jews and Greek-speaking people, probably proselytes. Paul was still preaching in the synagogue when Silas, a Jerusalem Jew,[1] and Timothy, a circumcised Greek Christian,[2] arrived from Macedonia. At this point, some of the Jews, probably the pure Jews, began to oppose Paul; and thus, Paul made the announcement that he would now go to the Gentiles. This pronouncement is not clear, for Paul did not move far from the vicinity of the Jews; and he continued to reach Jews. Did he mean that he would go to the Greek Jews or to the Gentile pagans? Does the statement mean that Paul intended to move into his Gentile ministry immediately or did the statement become more of a prophetic statement of gradual shift from Jews to Gentiles? J. Massingberd Ford suggests that Paul went primarily to proselytes when he turned to the Gentiles. She understands the description of Titius Justus, σεβομένου τὸν θεόν, as a technical term for proselyte.[3] The essential Jewish identification of Paul's converts was confirmed by Gallio. Paul was considered to be an accredited Jew and his converts, under the Roman law, became Jews. Legally, all of Paul's converts then were full proselytes, a designation which would greatly upset the Jews. As "Jews," the Corinthian Christians even had the right to set up courts of their own.[4]

---

[1] Acts 17:1-9. [2] Acts 17:4.

---

[1] Acts 15:22, 27, 32.   [2] Acts 16:1ff.

[3] Ford, "Corinthians or Hebrews," p. 403; Acts 18:7.

[4] Avigdor Tcherikover, _Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews_ (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961), p. 29; cf. _The Jewish Encyclopedia_, 1916 ed., s.v., "Diaspora," by Theodore Reinach.

The fact that Paul's congregation was made up of full Jews and "Jewish" proselytes at various stages of development and also the fact that the congregation was declared to be under Jewish law had implications for its future development. There would naturally be a high regard for the Mosaic law; but without the long period of prebaptismal instruction, these new Christians could easily vary from Pharisaic subtlety to pagan ignorance in moral issues. This type of church composition would require both a great deal of re-thinking and re-examining for converts from Judaism and a great deal of instruction for pagan converts.

Scholars who favor a Hellenistic-Jewish origin for the source of Paul's trouble in I Corinthians use this evidence to indicate that the Corinthian church as pictured in Acts would have had strong Jewish leanings and that its composition, while uncertain, would have included large Jewish, proselyte, and God-fearing segments which would have to work out the details of their new relation to the law of Judaism. Reacting against the existence of a developed Gnosticism in Corinth, these interpreters find ample explanations with a Hellenistic-Jewish milieu.

Transition in Schlatter

Adolf Schlatter, who had been called "the greatest conservative of the generation before Bultmann,"[1] may properly represent in the interpretation of I Corinthians the transition from a Judaizing approach to a Hellenistic-Jewish approach. Without conceding to the conclusions of Baur's thesis, he traced the libertine pneumatics at Corinth to a Palestinian-Jewish source. This became the background for his discussion of the theology at Corinth.[1] Schlatter leaned toward the position of Lütgert, but he also recognized that Lütgert failed to understand the opponents as Jews, who were convinced of the advantage possessed by the seed of Abraham.[2]

---

[1] Robert Morgan, ed., trans., and intro., The Nature

Whereas in the nineteenth century, the main and only direct influence upon Paul's opponents considered by scholars was Judaism, the Hellenistic emphasis was pursued in the early years of this century. Schlatter represented a trend back toward the Jewish understanding. Since his time, a number of scholars have proposed that Judaism, especially apocalyptic and sectarian Judaism which was strongly influenced by Hellenism, should now be considered as the all-important background to I Corinthians.

Sensing that the older churches were concerned about the spiritual welfare of the newer communities of faith,

---

of New Testament Theology: The Contribution of William Wrede and Adolf Schlatter, Studies in Biblical Theology, 2nd ser., no. 25, ed. Peter R. Ackroyd et al. (London: SCM Press, 1973), p. 4.

[1] Adolf von Schlatter, Die korinthische Theologie, Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie, vol. 18 (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1914).

[2] Ibid., pp. 35-36.

Schlatter traced the source of trouble in Corinth to the arrival of missionaries from the east. These emissaries did not stress a return to the whole Jewish law, but they did sharply criticize Paul and they deliberately and systematically stirred up opposition to him in Corinth. They used the slogan, "We are Christ's," to express their spiritual independence, particularly from Paul. Their theme was absolute freedom, by which a Christian could exalt himself above nature, the law, and the church. This self-centered desire for freedom naturally led to the enslavement of others. Those who "knew" oppressed those who did not "know," because these Jewish evangelists felt that the gospel bestowed knowledge. Schlatter felt that it was this kind of liberty that led to the libertinism in Corinth.[1]

In the direction that Christianity took in Corinth and in the influence the emissaries exhibited over the Corinthian church, Schlatter explained that Greek intellectualism played an important part. The philosophical speculation and the religious piety in Hellenism which saw knowledge as the key to communion with God played an important part in the theology of the Palestinian ministers. Schlatter qualified this influence in this way:

> At Corinth, however, it was not as yet this pre-Christian Hellenism which found an entry into the Church; of philosophical speculations in the narrower sense there is no trace in the Corinthian epistles, for the men who

---

[1] Adolf von Schlatter, The Church in the New Testament Period,trans. Paul P. Levertoff (London: S. P. C. K., 1961), pp. 176-77.

> offered their wisdom to the Pauline Church came from a Jewish-Christian environment.[1]

Thus, rejecting both Baur's Judaizing thesis and Lütgert's identification of libertine Gnostics, Schlatter laid the foundation for a reassessment of the Jewish influence in the church at Corinth. When Schlatter found similarities to Gnostic theology, he traced it directly to Pharisaic theology, denying much of the Hellenistic influence. Unsurprisingly, Schmithals says that Schlatter's "solution to the problem signifies a backward step from Lütgert, who had indeed recognized the essentially non-Jewish spirit of the theologians in Corinth."[2]

Implications in Hebrews

Hugh W. Montefiore has proposed a stimulating hypothesis concerning the relationship of I Corinthians to the Epistle to the Hebrews.[3] He suggests that Hebrews was written by Apollos[4] after he had returned to Ephesus from the visit to Corinth recorded in Acts 19:1 and had heard of the difficulties in the Corinthian church. Apollos' letter was intended to stir up enthusiasm among his Christian readers as he showed them the superiority of Christianity over the Judaism into which they were in danger of lapsing, and as he urged them to rally behind their leaders.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 175.

[2] Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth, p. 123.

[3] Hugh W. Montefiore, The Epistle to the Hebrews, Harper's New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

[4] In Ibid., pp. 9-11, Montefiore attempts to show that Luther's guess at authorship was indeed correct when he selected Apollos.

Apollos' letter, according to Montefiore, both succeeded and failed. Apollos succeeded in his objectives in two ways. First, after the letter, nothing more is heard about the view that Jesus was really an angel incognito during his earthly life. Apollos showed that Jesus was superior to angels, but was not an angel. Second, Apollos succeeded in raising the morale of the Corinthian Christians. Nothing more is heard about the danger of Jewish Christians lapsing back into the practice of Judaism.[1]

In other ways, it appears that Apollos' letter failed. Many of his warnings and much of his advice went unheeded. For example, his warning about fornication and adultery[2] seems to have been totally ignored; in fact, the situation seems to have degenerated badly. In addition, Apollos' letter appears to have been twisted and misrepresented by the dissenting Christians at Corinth, who used the letter to undermine Paul. Apollos himself may have foreseen the eventual problem in Corinth when he recommended that his readers obey their leaders.[3] Perhaps Apollos already had some awareness of the incipient revolt against church authority, particularly represented by Paul. For this reason, Apollos went out of his way to demand the loyalty of Corinthians and to demonstrate his own loyalty to the founders of the churches.[1] "Remember those who led you," he wrote, "who spoke the word of God to you."[2]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 20. [2] Heb. 13:4. [3] Heb. 13:17.

Thus, though the Epistle to the Hebrews was well-intentioned, it had some unfortunate results, which are reflected in the letter of I Corinthians. Montefiore contends that this represents the occasion for the writing of I Corinthians. He feels that Paul wrote I Corinthians not long after the writing of Hebrews in order to deal with the situation that had developed in Corinth, especially as a result of Apollos' intervention. Montefiore cites a number of parallels, especially in I Cor. 1-4, which reflect the situation brought into being by Hebrews.[3] He feels that in those polemical chapters the background of the Epistle to the Hebrews must be understood.

The main point of concern for this study is that Montefiore understands the Corinthian church as a predominantly Jewish church in origin. Although he feels that some of the libertinism warned against in the Hebrews epistle was directed to former pagans and that this was a mixed church, he sees it as being predominantly Jewish in nature.[4]

---

[1] Montefiore, Hebrews, pp. 21-22. [2] Heb. 13:7.

[3] Montefiore, Hebrews, pp. 23-27. [4] Ibid., p. 16.

While admitting that I Corinthians is commonly accepted as written to Gentile Christians, J. Massingberd Ford has argued recently[1] that the majority of the recipients were Jewish Christians, whether pure Jews or former proselytes to the Jewish faith. Relying heavily upon the Acts source, she attempts to show that ". . . the Christian community in Corinth originated from a Jewish environment and was fostered by Jewish-Christian teachers."[2] She understands this as the reason for the lack of any reference in I Corinthians to the Apostolic Decree: it was not applicable since the Corinthians were mainly Jewish.

Ford seeks external evidence for her belief that the Corinthian Christians were Jewish in the first epistle of Clement to the Corinthians. Old Testament references are predominant in this epistle, since Clement based his arguments on and appealed to Old Testament principles primarily. Thus, Ford argues:

> Why should St. Clement have assumed (1) so much acquaintance with the OT, and (2) that the arguments from the OT would carry conviction, if his readers were former pagans? Could the Corinthian Church have appeared so Jewish to St. Clement and yet so Gentile to St. Paul? They both wrote in the same century, and one would not expect a sudden influx of Jewish influence between the Pauline correspondence and the Clementine. It is easier to presume a predominantly Jewish background from the beginning.[3]

Ford also explains her reaction to Montefiore's thesis. She agrees that I Corinthians and Hebrews were both sent to Corinth, but she understands the problems concerning the Jewish tendencies underlying the Epistle to the Hebrews to be in the beginning stages in I Corinthians. She dates Hebrews then between II Corinthians and I Clement, and she stresses that a uniform Jewish influence existed in the Corinthian church from the beginning. She does not see Apollos as necessarily a major contributor to the divisions in Corinth, but feels that if Apollos did write Hebrews, he might have written it to support Paul's arguments in I Corinthians.[1]

---

[1] Ford, "Corinthians or Hebrews," p. 402. [2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 416.

Implications in II Corinthians

Another dimension of the larger question of opposition in I Corinthians has to do with the importance of II Corinthians. How far is it permissible for an interpreter to draw on II Corinthians for an understanding of I Corinthians? Is Paul dealing with the same opponents in II Corinthians as in I Corinthians, as Schmithals would have it, or can a new group be isolated in II Corinthians, as Georgi would have it? Not all scholars treat the opponents contested in I Corinthians as the same as those behind II Corinthians. Dieter Georgi[2] has proposed the view that the opponents in II Corinthians were distinct from those in I Corinthians, and that those in II Corinthians were Jewish Christians with Hellenistic propaganda techniques. Georgi attempts to isolate a great shift in emphasis between I Corinthians and II Corinthians. Paul ceases to attack such things as libertinism and the over-emphasis on spiritual charismata and turns his full attention to defending his apostolic office throughout II Corinthians. Thus, Georgi interprets this to mean that between I Corinthians and II Corinthians, the false apostles appeared on the scene. They attacked Paul and attempted to alienate the Corinthian church from him.[1]

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 415-16. [2] Georgi, II Korinthbrief.

In dealing with II Corinthians, Derk Oostendorp[2] argues against the Gnostic theory at Corinth. He sets forth as a basic proposition of his work that ". . . the false apostles at Corinth were Jewish Christians who believed that at the resurrection of Jesus the kingdom was restored to Israel."[3] He also sees a more qualified shift in emphasis between the two canonical epistles, and he holds that it is impossible to use I Corinthians to refute the hypothesis that he proposes for II Corinthians.[4]

Thus, the later evidence of II Corinthians has not been correlated in any widely accepted way with the study of the opposition in I Corinthians. It should be noted, however, that if II Corinthians has anything to offer toward an understanding of I Corinthians, it would lean interpretation toward a more Jewish understanding of the epistles. The opponents in II Corinthians seem to be most easily recognized as Jewish Christians. As Barrett has pointed out in reference to the opposition in II Corinthians, "It was undoubtedly Christian Judaism."[1] While it is possible that the Corinthian congregation began as a predominantly Jewish group (Acts), turned into a Gentile-Gnostic group (I Corinthians), and then returned to the influence of Jewish Christianity (II Corinthians), some scholars are proposing a more consistent opposition in Corinth, that of Hellenistic Judaism.

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 14, 25ff.

[2] Derk Oostendorp, Another Jesus: A Gospel of Jewish Christian Superiority in II Corinthians (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1967).

[3] Ibid., p. iii. [4] Ibid., p. 82.

A Change in Paul's Message

J. C. Hurd has presented a detailed case arguing that a change in Paul's message produced the occasion for I Corinthians.[2] Using only the "response" section from I Cor. 7:1 to the end of the letter, Hurd has presented a view which would explain the background for the letter in terms of a shift in Paul's own preaching occasioned by a compromise he made with the Jerusalem church (i.e., the Apostolic Decree). The following outline, pages 35-39, taken from his book,[3] presents in capsule form the findings of Hurd's investigation. By comparing "Paul's Founding Mission"

---

[1] Barrett, "Paul's Opponents in II Corinthians," p. 253.

[2] Hurd, The Origin of I Corinthians.

[3] Ibid., pp. 290-93.

PAUL'S DIALOGUE WITH THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

Stage 1 PAUL'S FOUNDING MISSION	Stage 2 THE PREVIOUS LETTER	Stage 3 THE CORINTHIAN REPLY	Stage 4 I CORINTHIANS
Sexual Morality	I. APOSTOLIC DECREE Avoid Immorality (πορνεία)	Concerning Marriage	I Cor. 7
Preaching: "It is best for a man not to touch a woman."	Christians should be married because of the danger of immorality.	But it is best for a man not to touch a woman.	7.1-7. Yes, but because of the danger of immorality, asceticism should not be attempted except perhaps for short periods.
Encouraged intra-marital asceticism		Do you mean that married couples should forego asceticism?	
Discouraged marriage for single persons.		Do you mean that the unmarried should search for spouses?	7.8-9. It is best for them to remain single, unless they lack self-control.
Founded institution of "spiritual" (i.e., celibate) marriage.		Do you mean that our spiritual couples should abandon their vows?	7.25-38. It is well that they remain as they are, although marriage is no sin.
Conduct: Remained unmarried on principle.		But you yourself are unmarried.	7.7-8. I wish that all were as I myself am, but each has his gift.
		Do you mean that Christians married to unbelievers should obtain	7.10-16. Christians should not talk of divorce. Only if an unbeliever desires

PAUL'S DIALOGUE WITH THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH--Continued

Stage 1 PAUL's FOUNDING MISSION	Stage 2 THE PREVIOUS LETTER	Stage 3 THE CORINTHIAN REPLY	Stage 4 I CORINTHIANS
		divorces?	it is a separation permissible.
Concerning the World	Avoid all association with immoral men, i.e., unbelievers.	But it is neither possible nor necessary to avoid all contact with the world.	5.9-13a. I did not mean avoid contact with all immoral men; shun immoral Christians.
Preaching: "All things are lawful."		But all things are lawful for us.	6.12. Yes, but not all things are helpful.
	Avoid Idolatry	Concerning Idol Meat	I Cor. 8.1-11.1
Preaching: Christians have "knowledge."	Do not eat idol meat (εἰδωλόθυτα).	But we have knowledge.	8.1-13. Yes, but knowledge puffs up.
"An idol is nothing."		But an idol is nothing.	Yes, but there are so-called gods.
"There is no God but one."		But there is no God but one.	Yes, but not all have this knowledge.
"All things are lawful."		But all things are lawful.	10.23. Yes, but not all things build up.
Conduct: Ate meat from the public market.		But you yourself ate idol meat when you were with us.	9.1-27. "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle?"
	(Avoid Blood?)	Do you mean that we may not even buy meat in the market or eat with our friends?	10.25. Eat whatever is sold in the market, or served at banquets.

PAUL'S DIALOGUE WITH THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH--Continued

Stage 1 PAUL'S FOUNDING MISSION	Stage 2 THE PREVIOUS LETTER	Stage 3 THE CORINTHIAN REPLY	Stage 4 I CORINTHIANS
Concerning Worship	Do not let your worship be contaminated by the influence of pagan worship.	Concerning Worship But we have been following the traditions you gave us.	I Cor. 11.2-16. 11.2. I am glad you maintain the traditions I gave you,
Conduct: Allowed women to go unveiled during worship.	(a) Women should wear veils.	But our women never have been required to wear veils in the household of the church.	11.3. but it is unnatural and dangerous for women to be unveiled during worship.
	(b) Do not quench the Spirit, but test everything. Do not abandon yourselves to pagan enthusiasm.	Concerning Spiritual Men But how is it possible to test for the Spirit or to distinguish between spiritual men?	I Cor. 12-14 12.1-3. No one speaking by the Spirit says "Jesus be cursed!" But there are many better gifts of the Spirit than glossolalia. 13. Seek the higher gifts, especially love.
Spoke with tongues more than all the others.		You yourself spoke freely in the Spirit without making such distinctions.	14.18. I am glad that I speak in tongues, but I would rather prophesy.

PAUL'S DIALOGUE WITH THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH--Continued

Stage 1 PAUL'S FOUNDING MISSION	Stage 2 THE PREVIOUS LETTER	Stage 3 THE CORINTHIAN REPLY	Stage 4 I CORINTHIANS
Concerning Eschatology The End is at hand. We shall enter the Kingdom soon. The Body and Blood of the Lord will preserve us until the Day.	2. RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS Do not mourn for those who have died. At the Parousia they shall be resurrected as Christ was resurrected. We shall enter the Kingdom together.	Concerning Bodily Resurrection We do not believe in bodily, fleshly resurrection. The idea is gross and unspiritual.	I Cor. 15 15. 1-28. But you do believe in the Resurrection of Christ. 15. 35-57. Resurrection will be in a spiritual, not a fleshly body.
	3. COLLECTION I am making a collection for the poor of the saints in Jerusalem. Your generosity will be pleasing to God.	Concerning the Collection We shall be glad to join in your undertaking, although, of course, our resources are limited. Are you to receive this money in person? Perhaps others should share this responsibility.	I Cor. 16. 1-9 16.1,2. Save something every week. 16.3-9. I will send your accredited representatives with it to Jerusalem. I may not go myself.

UMI

PAUL'S DIALOGUE WITH THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH--Continued

Stage 1 PAUL'S FOUNDING MISSION	Stage 2 THE PREVIOUS LETTER	Stage 3 THE CORINTHIAN REPLY	Stage 4 I CORINTHIANS
		Concerning Apollos Will it be possible for Apollos to return to us?	I Cor. 16.12 I urged Apollos to go, but he did not wish to at this time.

and "The Previous Letter," Hurd illustrates the effect of the Jerusalem Decree on Paul's position. When compared with these two reconstructed columns, the major portion of I Corinthians can be interpreted as an attempt to reconcile two basically contradictory positions.

Hurd's attractive scheme requires the acceptance of John Knox's dating of Pauline chronology.[1] Hurd has decided in favor of Knox over the evidence of Acts, as far as chronology is concerned. Hurd portrays the youthful Paul who first reaches Corinth as idealistic and naive. By reading between the lines, Hurd feels that development can be seen from the simple Paul to the more mature writer of I Corinthians. Instead of attributing the source of conflict to the Corinthians, Hurd blames the trouble on the vacillating position of Paul.

> We have by our reconstruction of Paul's early Corinthian ministry gained an insight into a period of Paul's life about which little has been written. Here we meet a younger, more vigorous Paul, fired with enthusiasm in his new faith, less cautious in his theological statements than he later became, little conscious of the weaknesses of human nature. Boldly speaking with tongues, he demonstrated the power of the risen Christ and preached that his Lord would soon put an end to human history and establish God's Kingdom. It is clear that in many of the areas we have discussed Paul came to revise his presentation, and even his understanding, of the gospel which he preached.[2]

This leads Hurd to conclude that the letter of I Corinthians was directly or indirectly the result of Paul's own change of position.

---

[1] Knox, Life of Paul, pp. 61-73.

[2] Hurd, The Origin of I Corinthians, pp. 387-88.

Gnosticism is not seriously considered by Hurd as a potential source of trouble, because he views the "knowledge" and the "wisdom" of the Corinthians as having their origin in Paul. Hurd's position then presents the source of the problem in I Corinthians as external to the Corinthian church and as inherent in Paul's developing correspondence with the church. Through a reconstruction of the stages of the relations between Paul and the Corinthian church, Hurd concludes that the controversies behind I Corinthians were not caused by any extraneous influence upon the congregation, but by Paul's own change of mind in the time between Paul's Corinthian ministry and the "Previous Letter" which Hurd attempts to reconstruct.

Conclusion

In order to understand the nature of Paul's argumentation in I Corinthians, it is necessary to ascertain as far as possible the identity of the opposition to Paul in Corinth. The older view of F. C. Baur that the opponents were representatives of Jewish Christianity was based upon his presupposition of a fundamental clash between the Jewish and Gentile sections of the church. Although Baur's basic ideas have been rejected in this century, there has been a recent trend toward understanding the opponents as Jewish in nature. More popular, however, has been the theory that the opponents were Gnostics. This is based on the assumption that Gnosticism is pre-Pauline and pre-Christian, a view which, if correct, may confuse gnostic tendencies with developed Gnosticism.

The preceeding survey has illustrated the emphasis placed in this discussion on I Cor. 1-4. From Baur to the present, most research has focused upon these chapters. For example, Johannes Munck[1] has presented a rather individualistic theory based upon these chapters. He understands the problem being dealt with in I Cor. 1-4 as ". . . one of bickerings between the Corinthians, but not of factions or of clear points of view as to doctrine and practice."[2] From his survey of significant terms like αἵρεσις and σχίσματα and his belief that the so-called factions appear nowhere outside of chapters 1-4, he concludes that the texts used previously as evidence for the assumption of factions have reference only to disunity and bickerings. Owing to their Greek environment, the Corinthians have misunderstood their Christian leaders to be teachers of wisdom. The Corinthians have understood themselves to be wise and have made this a cause for boasting. Paul attacks not the persons whose names are invoked, nor the factions that have gathered around the names, but the church itself for misunderstanding the gospel, Christian leaders, and their position. In his determination to prove that there is no Judaizing evident in I Cor. 1-4, Munck stresses his belief that this is an essentially Greek (but not Gnostic) problem. This Greek phenomenon, however, has significance also for the Jews.

---

[1] Johannes Munck, Paul and the Salvation of Mankind, trans. Frank Clarke (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959).

[2] Ibid., p. 166.

The specific focus for this study will be on I Cor. 5-6, which reflect serious problems with fornication. This type of immorality appears to be the original source of controversy between Paul and the Corinthian church during the interval between the founding of the church and the writing of I Corinthians. The procedure involves an exploration in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Judaism as possible sources for such a problem, and then an examination of the texts themselves for any indications. The conclusion reached for the background of this particular problem will then be related to the entire epistle in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

GNOSTICISM AS A SOURCE FOR SEXUAL LIBERTINISM

Definition

> The term Gnosticism usually designates a widespread religious philosophy, current especially in the early Christian era, which was characterized by the doctrine that salvation is achieved through knowledge or γνῶσις.

With this preciseness of definition, George W. MacRae begins his article on "Gnosticism" for the New Catholic Encyclopedia. Such preciseness is impossible in defining this phenomenon, however; and MacRae's next sentence even speaks about the "obvious inadequacy of this definition."[1] The process of clarifying the opposition at Corinth involves one in the inexacting process of defining "Gnosticism." This is a scientific term which, strangely enough, has no generally accepted scientific definition. The accuracy of any definition is complicated by the historically changing views of what Gnosticism is and by the extreme complexity of the religious movement itself. In addition, no one single source has been isolated from which the movement can be said to have originated. Thus, recent researchers have not been able to agree on any precise definition. In this connection, Charles H. Dodd has pointed out three significant reminders:

---

[1] New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967 ed., s.v. "Gnosticism," by George W. MacRae.

> It will be well to set down a few more or less certain facts. First, there is no Gnostic document known to us which can with any show of probability be dated--at any rate in the form in which alone we have access to it--before the period of the New Testament. . . .
>
> Secondly, the typical Gnostic systems all combine in various ways and proportions ideas derived from Christianity with ideas which can be shown to be derived from, or at least to have affinities with, other religious or philosophical traditions. . . .
>
> Thirdly, the various Gnostic systems differ widely in the way in which they introduce and combine these disparate elements, and each system has to be considered separately for what it is in itself. No general and all-embracing answer can be given to the question, What is the relation of Gnosticism to Christianity?[1]

These factors have posed a baffling problem for all who would seek to define "Gnosticism" in a way that would be theoretically valid and practically useful. The general consensus of scholarship would be that all who have tried have only partly succeeded.

At this point, reference should be made to the Messina Colloquium in 1966.[2] Here a large number of scholars and specialists from many countries met to discuss the problems of Gnosticism. Part of this colloquium, for example, focused upon the origins of Gnosticism and included a number of papers dealing with the Jewish contribution to Gnosticism. Another significant aspect of this colloquium involved an attempt to formulate a definition of Gnosticism which would clarify the confusing situation and which would eliminate the problems arising from an inadequate definition. Even though some practical distinctions were made which will be somewhat useful later in this chapter, one of the salient features of the colloquium was a general agreement that it is impossible to reduce Gnosticism to a short, precise definition. Instead, the colloquium moved more toward the task of describing this religious complexity, rather than defining it. Thus, in his article, "Towards a Definition of Gnosticism," which was rewritten to take into account the findings of the colloquium, Th. P. van Baaren concludes with a list of sixteen characteristics or descriptions as his "definition" of Gnosticism.[1] This in itself illustrates the inability and failure of modern scholarship to establish a precise definition of this phenomenon.

---

[1] Charles Harold Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1960), p. 98.

[2] The texts and discussions of the colloquium have been published as Ugo Bianchi, ed., The Origins of Gnosticism: Colloquium of Messina 13-18 April 1966/ Le Origini dello Gnosticismo: Colloquio di Messina 13-18 Aprile 1966, Studies in the History of Religions: Supplements to Numen, vol. 12 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967).

In this study, as explained previously,[2] the term "Gnosticism" will be used to describe a developed system of thought which in its formulation represented a heresy in Christian development. Thus, patterns of thought which contain elements later incorporated into Gnosticism should not be construed as Gnosticism proper, for such patterns may not have developed into Gnostic concepts. Since the question of origin remains open, as will be shown, the historian should be cautioned against identifying emerging trends as evidence of a developed system. The ambiguity of describing such trends accurately poses a critical problem to those who would attempt to date Gnosticism in the New Testament era. At what point in time did the movement include enough development and enough of the descriptions so that it could be legitimately defined as Gnosticism?

---

[1] Th. P. van Baaren, "Towards a Definition of Gnosticism," in Ibid., pp. 178-79.

[2] See p. viii.

Sources

One of the principal tasks of future generations of scholars will be to clarify the definition of this religious phenomenon. The use of various terms (e.g., gnosis, Gnostic, pre-gnostic, proto-gnostic, etc.) has been somewhat helpful, but not precise, in light of the confused definition of the phenomenon itself. Fortunately, the sources for the study of Gnosticism have dramatically increased. The task of defining this movement has been greatly aided by the well-known discovery of a library of original Gnostic documents near the site of the ancient city of Chenoboskion. The most important town near this site is the modern Nag Hammadi; hence the more than fifty documents are frequently referred to under this name.[1]

---

[1] Cf. Willem Cornelis van Unnik, Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings (London: SCM Press, 1960); Jean Doresse, The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics: An Introduction to the Gnostic Coptic Manuscripts Discovered at Chenoboskion, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Hollis & Carter, 1960); James M. Robinson, "The Coptic Gnostic Library Today," New Testament Studies 14 (April 1968):356-401; and David M. Scholer, Nag Hammadi Bibliography 1948-1969 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971).

As more of these texts are published and studied, more and more light can be expected to be shed on the nature of this system of thought.

Ideally, the formulation of Gnostic doctrines should proceed from a study of the sources themselves. Unfortunately, one of the major difficulties in dealing with Gnosticism has to do with sources. Secondary sources have been the primary source for information concerning Gnosticism. The chief secondary sources are the works of Church Fathers like Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Origen, Epiphanius, and Tertullian. These polemical writers present Gnostic views in the worst possible light. From these writings, Gnosticism can be seen only from the viewpoints of its opponents and is, therefore, described negatively. Fortunately, some early Christian writings preserve copies of Gnostic documents. Other Gnostic writings have been preserved by pagan, Rabbinical, and Islamic writers who sought to refute Gnostic authors. Additional sources for Gnostic thought have been coming to light in recent years, and these are constantly being increased by effective archaeology. Thus, the study of Gnosticism remains in a transitional stage.

Dating

One of the most important considerations for the present study is the dating of Gnosticism. Is there such a phenomenon as a pre-Christian Gnosticism which could have been manifested at Corinth? The answer hinges largely on one's presuppositions and definition of Gnosticism. From the point of view of history, Gnosticism first appears as a heresy within the Christian church; but there are scholars who insist that Gnosticism is not merely a Christian heresy, but a pre-Christian phenomenon. Although Gnostic systems of thought and doctrine are sometimes regarded as pre-Christian, the earliest testimonies available for the existence of Gnosticism, as generally described, come from the second century A.D. This provides strong support to those who deny the existence of a Gnostic religious system in the first century A.D.

According to the distinction made at the Messina Colloquium in 1966,[1] "proto-Gnostics" find the essence of Gnosticism in the first century and also outside the strictly Christian Gnosticism of the second century. Those who hold to this view appeal especially to Iran, to the Indo-Iranian world, to Platonism, and to Orphism for evidence supporting their position. The "pre-Gnostic," on the other hand, recognizes the existence of themes, motifs, concepts, and ideas in the pre-Christian and pre-Gnostic period, which underlie and prepare the way for the development of Gnosticism proper. "Pre-Gnostic" scholars find supportive evidence in Jewish apocalyptic thought, Qumran scrolls, Pharisaism, the atmosphere of crisis in Judaism following the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and certain concepts in Christian thought. The distinction between "pre-Gnosticism" and "proto-Gnosticism" is useful in that it sets forth the real issue of present discussion and debate--the relationship of Gnosticism to first-century Christianity. German scholars in particular have tended to expound the proto-Gnostic point of view, while British and American scholars have usually claimed the pre-Gnostic position. This distinction in understanding becomes extremely significant in relating Gnosticism to New Testament Christianity. If Gnosticism influenced early Christianity, the Gnostic system must be at least contemporary with it, if not older.

---

[1] The various proposals from which these distinctions emerge are given in full by Bianchi, ed., Origins, pp. 161ff.

Origins

The title "Gnostic" was originally an appellation used for certain groups in the early Christian centuries. The term was applied by second and third century patristic writers to a large number of pseudo-Christian teachers and sects, such as Basilides and Valentinus, who were regarded as definitely heretical. The first detailed source for various Gnostic systems was written by Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in southern France, around A.D. 180. This source is contained in the first book of his treatise, "On the Discovery and Refutation of Gnosis Falsely So-called," which is usually cited by the title "Adversus haereses."[1] Irenaeus relied in part on a lost work of Justin (dated around A.D. 150) and in part on oral and written testimony from Gnostics themselves, including the Apocryphon of John, extant in several Coptic versions of the fourth and fifth centuries.[1] He traced the origin of all Gnostic doctrines to a single source, the heresy of Simon Magus which he found mentioned, or at least alluded to, in the canonical Acts of the Apostles. He refers to "Simon of Samaria, from whom all sorts of heresies derive their origin."[2] The thrust of his argument is that to understand the origins of Gnostic doctrines is to understand Gnosticism itself.[3]

---

[1] Robert McQueen Grant, ed., Gnosticism: An Anthology (London: Collins, 1961), p. 21.

Subsequent scholarship has not been able to define the origins of Gnostic thought as simply as did Irenaeus. Later Church Fathers emphasized the influence of Plato and of misunderstood Greek philosophy in general upon this Christian heresy called Gnosticism. Modern scholars have traced Gnostic origins to such divergent sources as Judaism; pagan religion; Hellenistic philosophy; Syrian, Iranian, Babylonian, or Egyptian religion; and Christianity. Gnosticism is normally referred to as a syncretistic phenomenon, without a simple, single origin. W. C. van Unnik lists the spheres of influence which must be taken into account when seeking to identify the origins of Gnostic thought:

---

[1] E.g., Søren Giversen, trans., intro., and comm., Apocryphon Johannis: The Coptic Text of the Apocryphon Johannis in the Nag Hammadi Codex II, Acta Theologica Danica, vol. 5 (Copenhagen: Prostant & Munksgaard, 1963).

[2] Irenaeus Adversus haereses (trans. Alexander Roberts and W. H. Rambaut) 1. 23. 2.

[3] Cf. Grant, ed., Gnosticism: An Anthology, p. 21.

> (1) Iran, the ancient Persia, whence comes, in particular the explicit expression of dualism, the antithesis between light and darkness, the absolutes of good and evil.
> (2) Babylonia, the land of astrology. Astrology was very widespread in the ancient world, and its fatalism dominated the lives of many people. The frequently recurrent notion of the seven planetary powers ruling the world comes chiefly from this quarter.
> (3) Western Asia (Syria, with its worship of the Sun-god as the Most High).
> (4) Greece, with her philosophy; it was principally those currents of philosophy with a religious hue which strongly influenced Gnosticism, such as the popularized elaboration of Platonic concepts, stressing an opposition between matter and spirit, the Stoic with his theory that everything is motivated by the sparks of divine Reason, which includes everything within itself, and the Neo-Pythagorean ideas which revived at this time, with their asceticism and mystic doctrine of numbers.
> (5) Judaism, with the Old Testament as its sacred book; so far as Gnosticism is concerned, its influence was largely negative, issuing in a repudiation of the God of the Old Testament as the evil Creator--but the influence is there; especially is there an affinity with various mystical sects, ostracized by official Judaism; this influence is felt most strongly in the sphere of the magic arts.
> (6) Egypt, with its widespread mystery-cult of Isis-Osiris; in one special branch of the Gnostic literature--the so-called Hermetic writings, which are of pagan origin--revelation is attributed to the Egyptian Thot (equivalent of the Greek god, Hermes); the thesis has been sustained that these Hermetic writings are a Greek version of the theology of ancient Egypt.

This writer concludes that "Gnosticism then is a product of this world of religious ideas and convictions, flowing and mingling together."[1] Since the basic tenets of Gnosticism are products of syncretism, each of these sources and almost all combinations of them have been proposed as the origin of Gnosticism. No theory has proven to be adequate, which leads some scholars to diverge from the mainstream toward a more autonomous view of Gnosticism.

---

[1] Unnik, Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings, pp. 35-36.

Hans Jonas,[1] for example, insists that in the midst of great changes in various religious and philosophical systems a new spiritual principle emerged. This principle was then manifested in Hellenistic Judaism, Babylonian astrology, mystery cults, Christianity, and Neo-Platonic schools of philosophy. This new Gnostic principle was more manifested in than derived from these streams of thought. In this way, Jonas sets the stage for peaceful interaction among various religious and philosophical systems, which resulted in a Gnostic system.

Gilles Quispel also emphasizes that Gnosticism must be considered as ". . . a religion of its own, with its own phenomenological structure, characterized by the mythical expression of self-experience through the revelation of the 'Word,' or, in other words, by an awareness of a tragic split within the Deity itself."[2] He then is not willing to define Gnosticism as an acute Hellenization of Christianity or as a Christian heresy rooted in Greek philosophy. He refuses also to see Gnosticism as mainly a survival of old Iranian religious concepts, because he conceptualizes Gnosticism in a more autonomous sense.

---

[1] Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion: The Message of Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity, 2nd ed. rev. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 3-27.

[2] Gilles Quispel, Gnostic Studies I (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaelogisch Instituut in het Nabije Oosten, 1974), p. 202.

Kenneth Rexroth strongly disagrees with those who would suggest that Gnosticism was ". . . a sort of international secret religion which was scattered all through the Near East in the years just before the Christian Era."[1] While some stress its affinities with Greek, Persian, Babylonian, and Egyptian elements, along with its debt to vulgarized Neo-Platonism and Stoicism, Rexroth also leans more to an autonomous view. He admits the presence of many syncretistic cults in that time period, but feels there is little to substantiate Gnosticism as a syncretistic religion.[2]

In this process of defining the origins of Gnosticism, the boundaries have been immensely broadened; but the answer remains one of the great enigmas of early Christian history. Without a precise starting point for the phenomenon, the tendency has been to see Gnosticism as a mosaic of various elements. The most important of these elements for this study is heterodox Judaism. In what way was Gnosticism rooted in or affected by Judaism, particularly as seen in Hellenized Jews such as Philo of Alexandria and some adherents of apocalyptic thought? R. M. Wilson devotes considerable time in his The Gnostic Problem[3] to the dualistic tendencies in Diaspora Judaism. He considers Philo to be a main factor in the transition from Judaism to Gnostic thinking. When Philo attempted to make Judaism acceptable to the Hellenistic world, he allegorized and borrowed Greek terms and concepts. The Logos concept, particularly, was foreign to orthodox Judaism but germane to incipient Gnosticism. R. M. Grant in his Gnosticism and Early Christianity[1] makes a strong case for the dualistic ideas of apocalyptic Judaism as a source for Gnosticism. Among apocalyptists, alienation from political, social, and religious structures led to a belief in knowledge of the future made possible by secret revelation.

---

[1] Kenneth Rexroth, "A Primer of Gnosticism," in George Robert Stow Mead, Fragments of a Faith Forgotten: The Gnostics, A Contribution to the Study of the Origins of Christianity, with an Introduction by Kenneth Rexroth (New Hyde Park: University Books, 1960), p. xv.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Robert McLachlan Wilson, The Gnostic Problem: A Study of the Relations Between Hellenistic Judaism and the Gnostic Heresy (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1964).

Major Tenets

Isolation of the major tenets of such an ambiguous movement as Gnosticism is impossible to accomplish with absolute definitiveness. All the variant forms of Christian, pseudo-Christian, and non-Christian forms of Gnosticism cannot be delineated; but some basic ideas and concepts do emerge from Gnostic thought. As Laeuchli has pointed out, "It is impossible to speak about Gnosticism at all without doing constantly *some* violation to *some* system."[2] The basic structure of Gnostic thought, which includes dualism, emanationism, and salvation through esoteric knowledge, needs to be described.

---

[1] Robert McQueen Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

[2] Samuel Laeuchli, *The Language of Faith: An Introduction to the Semantic Dilemma of the Early Church* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 88.

As a famous Valentinian formula states:

> But it is not only the washing that is liberating, but the knowledge of who we were, and what we have become, where we were or where we were placed, whither we hasten, from what we are redeemed, what birth and what rebirth.[1]

This explains the significance of knowledge to the system of thought, for here salvation is accomplished by the assimilation of esoteric knowledge, not by the power of God nor by human faith. This special knowledge overcomes man's ignorance and includes an understanding of man's divine origin and of his present situation due to the nature of the world. This requirement becomes the basis for understanding the soteriology of Gnostics.[2]

The need for such knowledge is occasioned by the radical dualism between a transcendent God and a material world. The Gnostic understanding of God reveals the absolute ontological dualism that in some form underlies every Gnostic tendency. This alien or unknown God is as unalterably opposed to the world of men, angels, and semidivine beings as are light to darkness and good to evil. The nature of this deity is alien to that of the world, which he neither created nor governs. Thus, this transcendent God is hidden from all creation and is unknowable by natural concepts. Although the lower parts are descended from the God, they do not know the true God and they obstruct knowledge of God in the world over which they rule. There is complete separation of God from the world, and knowledge of this unknown Being is available only through supernatural revelation and illumination.[1]

---

[1] Clement of Alexandria _Excerpta ex Theodoto_ (trans. Robert Pierce Casey) 78. 1-2.

[2] Cf. Floyd V. Filson, "Symposium: Studies in Gnosticism: Gnosticism in the New Testament," _McCormick Quarterly_ 18 (May 1965):4: "They are saved from their mired-down situation in this inferior alien world by being awakened and reminded who they really are, how they fell back into their present unhappy situation, and how they may get back to their own true home."

Since the supreme God is perfect and good, there is a need to explain why the world is experienced as imperfect and evil. The most prevalent explanation of this dualism begins with an intermediate area between the transcendent Being and man in which there are a variety of personages and relationships. There are a series of emanations between God and the world. Sometimes these emanations are traced back to God Himself, but without affecting His transcendence. The thirtieth (sometimes the twelfth) emanation or aeon, called Sophia, produced an imperfect and inferior Demiurge, the creator of the material world. The world, then, was considered to be evil, and to be totally separated from God.[2]

---

[1] Hippolytus The Refutation of All Heresies 7. 21; Irenaeus Adversus haereses 1. 1. 1-2.

[2] Cf. Ibid., 1. 4. 2-5; see G. van Groningen, First Century Gnosticism: Its Origins and Motifs (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), p. 193, for an excellent illustration revealing the separation of the material world from the fullness (pleroma) of God.

The main concern for Gnostics was not primarily with the evil world as such, but with the nature of man. According to many Gnostics, man is composed of three elements: a material body (soma), a soul (psyche), and a spirit (pneuma). Enclosed in the soul, the spirit is the divine spark in man which descends from God. The goal of man's existence is for that divine spark to exit this world of matter and return again to the good God through special knowledge.[1]

Since ignorance is an integral result of man's mundane existence, this knowledge was received from a redeemer figure whose essential function was to reveal or communicate this saving knowledge to man. This Gnostic savior was a semidivine personage. He was a messenger from God and does not become incarnate. Gnosticism then is essentially docetic in that the redeemer merely seems to become incarnate.

The Gnostic concept of a redeemer has received a great deal of attention in the scholarly world. It is entirely possible that since most early Gnostics attempted to identify themselves with Christianity, a place in the system had to be made for Jesus Christ. The Gnostic Christians made Jesus Christ identical with the Logos, one of the prominent aeons emanating from God. Jesus Christ would not be unique in that Jesus Christ had to be understood as docetic.[1] Consistent with dualistic ontology, the Logos departed from Jesus before the passion. Irenaeus cites Cerinthus who taught that

---

[1] Cf. Hippolytus *Elenchos* 7. 27. 6.

> . . . after his baptism, Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove from the Supreme Ruler, and that then he proclaimed the unknown Father, and performed miracles. But at last Christ departed from Jesus, and that then Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ remained impassible, inasmuch as he was a spiritual being.[2]

Although Jesus was understood in this way, the Logos was made to conform to the New Testament image as much as possible.

The existence of a pre-Christian redeemer myth has never been adequately proven, though some, like Bultmann,[3] have made valiant attempts. The exact relationship between Jesus Christ and the development of a Gnostic redeemer myth has never been determined precisely. Though there are some who would say that the Gnostic redeemer myth was ". . . radically altered by being attached to the historical figure of Jesus, and thus transformed precisely into an interpretation of him, of his person, work and destiny,"[1] other scholars would opine that the influence was just the opposite.

---

[1] Laeuchli, The Language of Faith, pp. 65-66; cf. the Valentinian fragment quoted by Clement of Alexandria Miscellanies (trans. John Ernest Oulton and Henry Chadwick) 3. 7. 59:

> "Jesus endured all things and was continent; it was his endeavour to earn a divine nature; he ate and drank in a manner peculiar to himself, and the food did not pass out of his body. Such was the power of his continence that food was corrupted within him; for he himself was not subject to the process of corruption."

[2] Irenaeus Adversus haereses (trans. Roberts and Rambaut) 1. 26. 1.

[3] In his Theology of the New Testament, 1:164ff., Rudolf Bultmann even seeks to document the myth in various New Testament passages.

Gnostic Ethics

The diversity of doctrine and morality in Gnosticism is predicated on the belief that each pneumatic is sovereign in the sphere of knowledge. Hence, there is a limitless variety of Gnostic doctrines; and this is nowhere more evident than in the field of ethics. Gnostics run the gamut from compulsive promiscuity to extreme asceticism. Gnostic morality in general is determined by hostility toward the evil world and contempt for all mundane ties.

In carrying out their role as Gnostics, the pneumatics withdrew themselves from the domain of the world and its powers. Since true life was the divine spark within them, their life on earth consisted of increasing withdrawal from matter. The Gnostic rebelled against any allegiance to this world. Although it appears paradoxical, from this principle two opposite extremes could be practiced. As Edwyn R. Bevan has observed, "Asceticism and lubricity are often plants springing from the same soil."[2] The ascetic repudiates allegiance to this world through absention while the libertine fulfills his rebellion through excessive license. Both extremes represent a revolt against the mundane existence in the evil world of matter. As Jonas points out, "Freedom by abuse and freedom by non-use, equal in their indiscriminateness, are only alternate expressions of the same acosmism."[1]

---

[1] Reginald H. Fuller, The New Testament in Current Study (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), p. 122.

[2] Edwyn Robert Bevan, Hellenism and Christianity (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1921), p. 81.

Since he possessed special knowledge, the ascetic felt an obligation to avoid further contamination by the world. He recognized corrupting potential in the world, and he sought to take seriously the danger of worldly influences. Therefore, he reduced contact with the world and its evil manifestations to a minimum. This isolation had, in the ascetic's mind, a purifying effect, preparing the soul for the ultimate redemption to the other realm. Most of the motivation for asceticism, however, was rooted in the utter contempt and enmity toward the evil world, as illustrated by Marcion.

Marcion's ascetic morality was based upon his desire to obstruct the cause of the Demiurge creator.[2] The purpose of obstructing the Creator's purpose is evident especially in Marcion's sexual prohibitions:

> On this ground, that they do not wish to fill the world made by the Creator-God, they decide to abstain from marriage. Thus they are in opposition to their Maker and hasten towards him who is called the good God, but

---

[1] Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, p. 275.

[2] Cf. Clement of Alexandria Miscellanies (trans. Oulton and Chadwick) 3. 4. 25: "Of the heretics we mentioned Marcion of Pontus as forbidding the use of this world's goods on the ground of opposition to the Creator."

> not to the God, as they say, of the other kind. As they wish to leave nothing of their own behind them on this earth, they are continent, not of their own free choice, but from hatred of the Creator, being unwilling to use what he has made.[1]

This implies that Marcion understood the reproductive scheme as an ingenious device used by the rulers of this world for the prolonged retention of souls in the world. The best way, then, for the ascetic to deal with this situation was to avoid it completely.

Revolt against the mundane existence manifested itself in the opposite extreme of libertinism. By rejection of conventional law or wisdom, especially as expressed in the Old Testament, libertine pneumatics indulged in a systematic flouting of all earthly standards of morality. There was no law but that of the spirit within them. Thus, sexual promiscuity could be conducted without fear of convention or consequences and was widespread among various Gnostic groups.

In the Gnostic view, there is little concept of spiritual or moral sin. Montefiore and Turner point out that ". . . there is no sense of sin" in the Gospel of Thomas.[2] Man is said to be ignorant of his true state, but sin is never mentioned. As in the canonical Scriptures, sin is deprivation and separation, but both deprivation and separation represent ignorance. Sin is intellectualized and spiritualized as a concept of "forgetting," a problem which is overcome by "knowledge."[1] Thus, in his comparative study of the Gospel of John and the Gospel of Truth (E.V.), C. K. Barrett observes:

---

[1] Ibid., 3. 3. 12.

[2] Henry Ernest William Turner and Hugh W. Montefiore, Thomas and the Evangelists, Studies in Biblical Theology (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 115.

> The difference between John and E.V. is nowhere clearer than in their treatment of sin--or rather, in E.V.'s almost complete failure to treat the subject at all. . . . It is particularly striking that the word "sin" . . . occurs only twice in E.V.[2]

In this same context, W. C. van Unnik says of the Gospel of Truth:

> Although one does find in the New Testament expressions such as "ignorance", "error", and the like to indicate a falling away from God, the primary cause of this falling away, from the New Testament standpoint, is "sin"--and in this "gospel"--or whatever you choose to call it--sin is not even mentioned![3]

Gnostic Sexual Libertinism

Basic to Gnostic doctrines of ethics was the anti-cosmic attitude which regarded this world as evil and material. The revolt against the evil world and its material Creator led to extreme license and antinomianism for some Gnostics. The polemics of the Church Fathers tell us a great deal about Gnostic libertinism as they describe the heresy itself. In a classic passage, Irenaeus said of the

---

[1] Laeuchli, The Language of Faith, pp. 77-78.

[2] Charles Kingsley Barrett, "The Theological Vocabulary of the Fourth Gospel and of the Gospel of Truth," in William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder, eds., Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper (New York: Harper & Bros., 1962), p. 212.

[3] Unnik, Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings, p. 68.

Gnostic libertines:

> Animal men, again, are instructed in animal things; such men, namely, as are established by their works, and by a mere faith, while they have not perfect knowledge. We of the church, they say, are these persons. Wherefore also they maintain that good works are necessary to us, for that otherwise it is impossible that we should be saved. But as to themselves, they hold that they shall be entirely and undoubtedly saved, not by means of conduct, but because they are spiritual in nature. For, just as it is impossible that material substance should partake of salvation (since, indeed, they maintain that it is incapable of receiving it), so again it is impossible that spiritual substance (by which they mean themselves) should ever come under the power of corruption, whatever the sort of actions in which they indulged. For even as gold, when submerged in filth, loses not on that account its beauty, but retains its own native qualities, the filth having no power to injure the gold, so they affirm that they cannot in any measure suffer hurt, or lose their spiritual substance, whatever the material actions in which they may be involved.
>
> Wherefore also it comes to pass, that the "most perfect" among them addict themselves without fear to all those kinds of forbidden deeds of which the Scriptures assure us that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.". . . For instance, they make no scruple about eating meats offered in sacrifice to idols, imagining that they can in this way contract no defilement. Then, again, at every heathen festival celebrated in honour of the idols, these men are the first to assemble; and to such a pitch from that bloody spectacle hateful both to God and men, in which gladiators either fight with wild beasts, or singly encounter one another. Others of them yield themselves up to the lusts of the flesh with the utmost greediness, maintaining that carnal things should be allowed to the carnal nature, while spiritual things are provided for the spiritual. Some of them, moreover, are in the habit of defiling those women to whom they have taught the above doctrine, as has frequently been confessed by those women who have been led astray by certain of them, on their returning to the church of God, and acknowledging this along with the rest of their errors. Others of them, too, openly and without a blush, having become passionately attached to certain women, seduce them away from their husbands, and contract marriages of their own with them. Others of them, again, who pretend at first to live in all modesty with them as with sisters, have in course of time been revealed in

> their true colours, when the sister has been found with child by her {pretended} brother.[1]

Here is contained a positive incentive to excess which several groups utilized in formulating their sexual ethics.

According to Irenaeus, the arch-Gnostic Simon the Samaritan lived with a prostitute named Helen, who he claimed was the mother of all, "the first conception of his mind." Simon taught that the Law of the Prophets was derived from the angels who created the world. The Law was a device used by the angels to enslave man.

> Moreover, the prophets uttered their predictions under the inspiration of those angels who formed the world; for which reason those who place their trust in him and Helena no longer regarded them, but, as being free, live as they please; for men are saved through his grace, and not on account of their own righteous actions. For such deeds are not righteous in the nature of things, but by mere accident, just as those angels who made the world, have thought fit to constitute them, seeking, by means of such precepts, to bring men into bondage. On this account, he pledged himself that the world should be dissolved, and that those who are his should be freed from the rule of them who made the world.[2]

Irenaeus proceeds to describe those who followed Simon and Helen as living promiscuously and performing magic. "They employ exorcisms and incantations and are constantly occupied with love-philtres, love-magic, familiar spirits, dream-inducers, and other abstruse matters."[3]

---

[1] Irenaeus Adversus haereses (trans. Roberts and Rambaut) 1. 6. 2-3.

[2] Ibid., 1. 23. 3.

[3] Irenaeus Adversus haereses (trans. Robert McQueen Grant) 1. 23. 4.

Hostility towards laws in general and toward the Old Testament law in particular is reflected in many of the early Christian-Gnostic systems. Basilides, for example, was accused by Irenaeus[1] of practicing an "indifferent" use of lust. Basilides was an early second-century student of Menander, a student of Simon the Samaritan. Basilides' teaching was based on his dualistic understanding. "There is salvation for the soul alone, since the body is by nature perishable."[2]

Carpocrates also promoted libertinism in the early second century by strongly encouraging participation in all sins. Here, instead of ignoring sins, there is a more positive injunction to participate in various sins, a stance which brings the Gnostic views of dualism to their logical conclusion. According to Irenaeus, since his followers believed that

> . . . souls are always made reincarnate until they have completed all sins. . . . the souls which in a single life on earth manage to participate in all sins will no longer become reincarnate but, having paid all their debts, will be freed so that they no longer come to be in a body."[3]

Carpocrates' son Epiphanes, as recorded by Clement of Alexandria, gave a more philosophical defense of promiscuity. He taught that sexual license was God's law revealed in nature, as contrasted to the "comic" words of "jest" seen in the decalogue. Based upon a logical view of quality and common ownership of all nature, he taught that women should be shared among men in pattern of the rest of the animal kingdom. After all,

---

[1] In his "Gnostic Origins and the Basilidians of Irenaeus," Virgiliae Christianae 13 (July 1959):121-25, Robert McQueen Grant offers a needed word of caution in depending upon the polemical description given by Irenaeus.

[2] Irenaeus Adversus haereses (trans. Grant) 1. 24. 5.

[3] Ibid., 1. 25. 4.

> With a view to the permanence of the race, he {God} has implanted in males a strong and ardent desire which neither law nor custom nor any other restraint is able to destroy. For it is God's decree. . . consequently one must understand the saying "Thou shalt not covet" as if the lawgiver was making a jest, to which he added the even more comic words, "thy neighbour's goods." . . . For he himself who gave the desire to sustain the race orders that it is to be suppressed, though he removes it from no other animals. And by the words "thy neighbour's wife" he says something even more ludicrous, since he forces what should be common property to be treated as a private possession.[1]

In speaking of the Cainites, a group which revered Cain, Esau, Korah, and the Sodomites, Irenaeus said that ". . . they cannot be saved unless they experience everything, as Carpocrates also said." Irenaeus then described their experiences:

> At each of these sinful and disgusting actions an angel is present, not only to hear of the boldness but to cause the uncleanness of the agent. They express the meaning of the action by invoking the angel: "O angel, I consume your work completely; O power, I perform your action." And this is "perfect knowledge," to undertake without fear such actions as should not even be mentioned.[2]

Perhaps the most gruesome description of Gnostic libertinism involves the libertine Gnostic sect of the

---

[1] Clement of Alexandria Miscellanies (trans. Oulton and Chadwick) 3. 2. 8-9 (brackets not original).

[2] Irenaeus Adversus haereses (trans. Grant) 1. 31.

Phibionites. Included in their sacred rites was a grotesque observance of the Eucharist, where men and women had intercourse without consummation:

> After they have had intercourse in the passion of fornication they raise their own blasphemy toward heaven. The woman and the man take the fluid of the emission of the man into their hands, they stand, turn toward heaven, their hands besmeared with the uncleanness, and pray as people called '*Stratiotikoi*' and '*Gnostikoi*', bringing to the father the nature of all that which they have on their hands, and they say: 'We offer to thee this gift, the body of Christ'. And then they eat it, their own ugliness, and say: 'This is the body of Christ and this is the Passover for the sake of which our bodies suffer and are forced to confess the suffering of Christ.' Similarly also with the woman: when she happens to be in the flowing of the blood they gather the blood of menstruation of her uncleanness and eat it together and say: 'This is the blood of Christ.' Therefore, when they read in the book of Revelation, 'I saw a tree that brought twelve kinds of fruit each year and he said to me, this is the tree of life', . . . they allegorize it to mean the monthly flow of the female blood. They have intercourse with each other but they teach that one may not beget children. The corruption is committed by them not for the sake of pleasure, because the devil plays with them and mocks the image formed by God. They bring the pleasure to its end, but they take to themselves the sperm of their uncleanness, not to place it down deep for the begetting of children, but to eat their shame themselves. And if someone from among them is detected to have let the natural emission of semen go in deeper and the woman becomes pregnant, then hear, what even worse they do: they pull out the embryo in the time when they can reach it with the hand. They take out this unborn child and in a sort of mortar pound it with the pestle and into this mix honey and pepper and other certain spices and myrrh, in order that it may not nauseate them, and then they come together, all this company of swine and dogs, and each communicates with the finger from the bruised child. And after they have finished this cannibalism finally they pray to God, saying, that we did not let the Archon of this desire play with us but collected the mistake of the brother. And this they also consider to be the perfect Passah.[1]

---

[1] Epiphanius *Panarion* (trans. Stephen Benko) 26. 4-5.

These Gnostic libertines then were free to indulge in sexual promiscuity, but they did not want to engender any children. "Procreation is wrong because it only divides this psyche and prolongs the time the psyche must spend in this world."[1]

Hopefully, this extreme type of Gnostic license was unusual. The Nag Hammadi texts have not provided any such description. Thus, Doresse has commented, "One finds oneself almost disappointed at this, so freely had the heresiologists given us to understand that mysteries of that description were common practice in the principal sects!"[2]

Gnostic Libertinism in Corinth

The belief that Gnosticism in a developed sense with its particular manifestation of sexual libertinism was pervading the Corinthian church in the mid-first century requires a considerable translation in time. Since no extra-biblical sources exist to document such a dating, exponents of "proto-Gnosticism" rely on the indirect references in the biblical letters themselves. Sexual license based on Gnostic ethics is declared to be exposed specifically in chapters five and six in I Corinthians.

For some, this transition from a developed second-century Gnosticism to the existence of Gnosticism in first-century Corinth poses no real problem. In fact, some find in the Corinthian epistles the clearest evidences in the entire New Testament that Gnosticism did exist during that period. In 1908 William Lütgert first suggested that Paul's opponents in Corinth were Gnostics;[1] and many have accepted this position including Bartsch, Bauer, Bousset, Bultmann, Dinkler, and Reitzenstein.[2]

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Doresse, Secret Books, p. 251.

Walter Schmithals has made the most profound influence on the scholarly world with his thoroughgoing exposition of Paul's opponents in both I and II Corinthians as Jewish Gnostics.[3] Schmithals finds his clue in the transferral of the Jewish title of Christ to the Gnostic primal man. He finds that this involved a Jewish Gnosticism in which the traditional figure of Jewish eschatological thought was linked terminologically with the Gnostic chief figure. This becomes Schmithals' key for unlocking the great doctrines of a Jewish Gnosticism which had made a profound influence at Corinth. This Jewish Gnosticism was maintained only a short time into the Christian era before it was Christianized so as to include a heavenly redeemer in the system. Schmithals points out ". . . the anthropological Christ myth of Jewish Gnosticism was intolerable for *pure* Gnosticism if it wanted to gain access to Christian circles or to appear as Christian."[1]

---

[1] Lütgert, Freiheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister, p. 24.

[2] Hans Werner Bartsch, ed., Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate, trans. Reginald H. Fuller, 2 vols. (London: S. P. C. K., 1953-62); Walter Bauer, Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity, 2nd ed. with added appendices by Georg Strecker, trans. a team from the Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins and ed. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); Bousset, Hauptprobleme der Gnosis; Rudolf Bultmann, Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: Thames & Hudson, 1956); Erich Dinkler, ed., Zeit und Geschichte: Dankesgabe an Rudolf Bultmann zum 80. Geburtstag (Tübingen: Mohr, 1964); and Reitzenstein, Die hellenistischen Mysterien-religionen, pp. 333-93.

[3] Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth; see James M. Robinson, "Basic Shifts in German Theology," Interpretation 16 (1962):79, where Schmithals' thesis is said to be comparable in importance to the Tübingen hypothesis of F. C. Baur; for those who hold to the positions of the Bultmann school, this work ". . . will probably represent the last word on the subject," according to Robert McLachlan Wilson, "Some Recent Studies in Gnosticism," New Testament Studies 6 (Oct. 1959):43.

In dealing with the critical passage for an understanding of sexual libertinism in Corinth, I Cor. 6:12-20, Schmithals and others who view the problem through Gnostic eyes find a great deal of support. The problem of unchastity with prostitutes finds its simplest explanation and identification as being a Gentile problem. By its very nature, the problem appears to be a Gentile one, for it is difficult to imagine Jews resorting to cultic prostitutes. Thus, some commentators, such as Jean Héring,[2] are quick to stress that this problem presupposes a group of Gnostic freethinkers in Corinth. This seems to be the best explanation from an obvious point of view.

The first theme word contained in the passage is ἐξουσία, where Paul uses the phrase πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν.

---

[1] Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, p. 79.

[2] Jean Héring, *The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*, trans. A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (London: Epworth Press, 1962), p. 44.

This phrase has commonly been interpreted as a quotation from the Corinthians.[1] Thus, Héring can say, "It goes without saying that each 'panta moi exestin'= 'everything is permissible for me', is at each occurrence the rallying cry of the libertines."[2] This Corinthian slogan will be discussed in more detail in Chapter IV, but it presents the context here for ἐξουσία. This word has various shades of meaning.[3] It may mean the power, ability, or capacity to do something; or it may mean the right, permission, or authorization to do something. The word may mean here "it is possible" or "it is permissible." Schmithals interprets the word with the former shade of meaning. He sees the Gnostic use of the slogan not in the sense that special permission has been granted, but that for the Gnostic ". . . it is a matter of free choice to act thus; for me no peril is involved therein."[4] This slogan then could be construed as a justification by Corinthian Gnostics for their right to sexual licentiousness. This understanding on the part of Gnostics would be rooted in the absolute nothingness of the σάρξ. Since the σάρξ is worthless, then the Gnostics would have the capacity and the ability to indulge themselves in πορνεία.

---

[1] See Hurd, The Origin of I Corinthians, p. 68, for a list of scholars who hold to this opinion.

[2] Héring, First Corinthians, p. 45.

[3] Cf. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 1964-74 ed., s.v. "ἐξουσία," by Werner Foerster.

[4] Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth, p. 231.

The other significant theme word in this passage is πορνεία, the broad term for sexual immorality. Paul undoubtedly had heard[1] that some of the Corinthians by appealing to the slogan, πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν, are explaining that one can eat anything without discrimination and that one can engage in sexual intercourse at any time without reservations. Paul is able to counteract this teaching with an unusual train of thought in the opening verses of the passage. In verse 12, he affirms the principle of πάντα μοί ἔξεστιν. This is strange in light of the fact that this section deals specifically with πορνεία. Then, after a casual reference to the unrestricted eating of food, Paul moves ahead in verse 13 to lay down the principle which underlies the imperative in verse 18, φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν. Paul explains his motivation for rejecting πορνεία in verse 14 with reference to the fact that the σῶμα is raised and especially in verse 15 with reference to τὰ σώματα as members of Christ. The assertion that the σῶμα would be raised and thus is imperishable is explained simply by Gnostic-oriented interpreters[2] as Paul's outlook on the Gnostic thesis which was reported to him, that the σῶμα is mortal, perishable, and therefore exempt from moral standards. With this explanation, there is the indication that in Corinth libertinism was justified in a specifically Gnostic way by reference to the perishability of the fleshly substance.

---

[1] It is not possible to identify the source of Paul's information. Various solutions have been proposed. For example, Kirsopp Lake in his The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul: Their Motive and Origin (London: Rivingtons, 1911), p. 135, suggested Chloe's people, while Joseph Barber Lightfoot in his Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul, ed. posthumously by J. Rendel Harris (London: Macmillan & Co., 1895), p. 202, suggested Stephanus.

[2] E.g., Héring, First Corinthians, p. 46, and Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth, p. 233.

As individuals are to avoid sexual immorality, so the church is to steer clear of any contact with πορνεία. Paul exhorts the church in chapter 5 to keep the fellowship of believers free from such sins, since toleration of the offender makes the whole church guilty. Thus, Paul demands that the congregation expel the impenitent one who lives in incest and break off all fellowship with those who live licentious lives.[1] This implies that Paul did not regard this gross case of immorality as the only instance of fornication in the church. He offers instruction as to procedure in dealing with this specific case as an example for other cases. Again, though it cannot be proven, some interpreters suggest that this case of incest presupposes a Gnostic setting. Schmithals finds adequate justification for this identification in the words of Irenaeus: "Others of them, too, openly and without a blush, having become passionately attached to certain women, seduce them away from their husbands, and contract marriages of their own with them."[2] Schmithals concludes, "With these words

---

[1] I Cor. 5, especially vv. 9 and 13.

[2] Irenaeus _Adversus haereses_ (trans. Roberts and Rambaut) 1. 6. 3.

Irenaeus describes precisely the occurrence which was the occasion for Paul's statements in I, 5."[1]

Conclusion

There is much difficulty in isolating a developed Gnostic system in Corinth during Paul's years of correspondence. Defining such a developed phenomenon in I Corinthians may be an anachronism, when the same situation may be easily credited to the existence of a pre-gnostic atmosphere which greatly influenced the Corinthians. Since present scholarship has no firm evidence of Gnosticism from Paul's day, the burden of proof lies with those who suggest such a definite root of opposition. The evidence given usually consists of references to what sound like Gnostic themes in the New Testament and of references within later Gnostic sources which appear to go back to pre-Christian times.[2] This author has not been adequately convinced that Gnosticism had infiltrated the Corinthian church in Paul's day and that the Corinthians were justifying their sexual liberty in specifically Gnostic ways.

The indirect approach to proving the existence and influence of such a religious system leaves much to be desired if the scholarly world is to be convinced and persuaded. The usual approach for proto-Gnostics to prove the existence of such a phenomenon has been to extrapolate backward in time from later Gnostic documents. The reconstruction of an early system with its theology and ethics can then be proposed; but lacking primary pre-Christian sources, its accuracy has to be gauged by interaction with such non-Gnostic documents as the New Testament. When awareness of this reconstructed Gnosticism is located in the New Testament, then the case for its early existence is said to be "proven." When libertinism of the type referred to in I Cor. 5-6 has affinities with this reconstructed system which is exemplified by later sources, then by the process of induction Gnosticism can be declared as the source of all opposition to Paul in Corinth.

---

[1] Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth, p. 237.

[2] Cf. William R. Schoedel, "The Rediscovery of Gnosis," Interpretation 16 (1962):393-94.

One of the common tools used in this process of explanation is the isolation of Gnostic technical terms in the New Testament. The Pauline and Johannine literature both reveal considerable semantic parallels with later Gnostic materials. Gnostic terms such as λόγος, φῶς, and γνῶσις are employed in the New Testament; but this means neither that these terms are used in a Gnostic manner nor that they have reference to any Gnostic system. As indicated, in I Cor. 6:12 the term ἐξουσία is used in what appears to be a slogan. This use of the term, because it appears later in Gnostic sources, is said to be adequate proof that the Corinthians were using the slogan for their license in specifically Gnostic ways. The possibility exists, however, that such a term as ἐξουσία was in common usage in New Testament times and later came to be used as a technical term in Gnostic thought. As G. L. Story, Jr., has said, "It can be easily shown that Paul uses terminology and language which are important in Valentinian Gnosticism. . . . This does not necessarily mean, however, that Paul uses this language in a Gnostic sense."[1] Thus, Story takes the position that second-century Valentinians used Pauline terminology.

The fact that Paul could use later Gnostic terms without Gnostic force suggests either that the technical meanings had not been developed in his time or that he was ignorant of them. It is difficult to conceive of such ignorance on the part of Paul. This well-educated Jewish Christian had traveled considerably around the various areas of the known world. We should assume, therefore, that he would have been exposed to Gnosticism if it were a popular religious movement in his day. If he had encountered Gnosticism in Corinth or elsewhere, why would he use a technical term such as γνῶσις so casually as he does in I Cor. 1-3? As a defender of the faith, he certainly would have desired to refute such a system of thought more directly. Why he apparently agreed with the slogan, πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν, is inconceivable if he was aware of the way Gnostics were using such a slogan. It must be concluded that if Gnosticism was present in Corinth, Paul was ignorant of its specific teaching; but his ignorance of such a religious system again is difficult to comprehend. The present author concludes, therefore, that Paul was not opposed by any developed Gnostic system in Corinth. The distinction made here is that what may be incipient Gnosticism should not be termed "Gnosticism." In fact, it is an anachronism to call Paul's opponents "Gnostics."

---

[1] Geoffrey L. Story, Jr., "The Valentinian (Gnostic) Use of the Letters of Paul" (Ph.D. dissertation: Northwestern University, 1968), pp. 13-14.

The purpose of this chapter is not to refute all possibility of Gnostic opposition in Corinth, however; rather it is to present the basic system and its relationship to πορνεία, to explore the possibility of its presence in Corinth, and to reconstruct the arguments for such existence. This alternative for isolating the opposition in Corinth offers a helpful backdrop for considering a different possibility: an essentially Jewish milieu as the source for the libertinism displayed in Corinth. To this possibility, attention is directed in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

HELLENISTIC JUDAISM AS A SOURCE FOR SEXUAL LIBERTINISM

The Dispersion

The fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. may be used as a pivotal date for the beginning of the dispersion of Jews outside of Palestine.[1] With the subsequent exile of many Jews, especially those of the upper classes, to Babylonia, the process of scattering the Jewish community outside of Palestine was begun. This scattering continued throughout the following centuries and included large numbers of Jews during the reign of Alexander the Great and the Macedonian kings. The Greek term διασπορά or "dispersion" is the term used to describe this scattering and settlement of Jews outside Palestine during the Persian, Greek, and Roman periods. Now the term is generally used to designate both the voluntary and involuntary scattering of Jews throughout the ancient world.[2] This process gained momentum before the time of I Corinthians so that by the first century A.D. there was hardly a country where Jews were not to be found. Thus, in speaking of the Jews, the author of _The Sibylline Oracles_ could state: "All the earth shall be filled with thee, and all the sea."[1] Strabo later states that in the time of Sulla (c. 85 B.C.), ". . . this people has already made its way into every city, and it is not easy to find any place in the habitable world which has not received this nation and in which it has not made its power felt."[2] Philo likewise speaks of the widespread dispersion of his people, claiming that ". . . so populous are the Jews that no one country can hold them, and therefore they settle in very many of the most prosperous countries in Europe and Asia both in the islands and on the mainland."[3] Josephus also asserts that ". . . there is not a people in the world which does not contain a portion of our race,"[4] and ". . .

---

[1] Actually this dispersion began at least as early as the ninth century B.C., when Hebrews were captured in war or emigrated for trade purposes. Cf. I Kings 20:34.

[2] Thus, James Hardy Ropes, in his A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, vol. 45, ed. Francis Brown and Alfred Plummer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916),

---

p. 122, can speak of ". . . the forced emigration of many thousands from both the northern and southern kingdom to Assyria and Babylon, the voluntary settlement in the Greek period of large numbers of Jews in Alexandria and other Egyptian cities, and in Cyrenaica, the planting of Jewish communities of traders and peaceful residents in Antioch and other places in Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece, and the colony of Jews in Rome" as comprising the Jewish dispersion in the first century A.D.

[1] _The Sibylline Oracles_ (trans. H. N. Bate) 3. 271.

[2] Quoted by Josephus _Jewish Antiquities_ (trans. Ralph Marcus) 7. 2.

[3] Philo _Flaccus_ (trans. F. H. Colson) 7. 46.

[4] Josephus _Jewish War_ (trans. H. St. J. Thackeray) 2. 16. 4.

there is not one city, Greek or barbarian, nor a single nation, to which our custom of abstaining from work on the seventh day has not spread, and where the fasts and the lighting of lamps and many of our prohibitions in the matter of food are not observed."[1] This widespread dispersion is confirmed by the evidence of the New Testament, which clearly indicates that there was hardly a country or a city where the Jews had not made an impact.[2]

Before the time of Alexander, the dispersion was largely into the East; but with his conquests, the Jewish dispersion turned to the West. Jews who had previously spoken only Hebrew or Aramaic began to adopt the koine language of the Greeks. Jewish communities began to develop in such places as Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, Cyprus, Cyrene, and Rome. The apostle Paul found his kinsmen in the various places he visited.

Various attempts have been made to determine the total population of Jews in the Roman empire at the beginning of the Christian era, with estimates often ranging from six to eight million.[3] These figures may be somewhat inflated, for they are based on such unproven and probably exaggerated sources as Josephus, who implies that there were over three million Jews in Galilee alone,[1] and Philo, who reported that there were over a million Jews in Alexandria and the surrounding area, comprising an extremely significant portion of the city.[2] There can be little doubt, however, that the Jews were very numerous and comprised a significant portion of the population in some places.

---

[1] Josephus Against Apion (trans. H. St. J. Thackeray) 2. 282.

[2] Cf. Acts 2:9-11; Jas. 1:1; I Pet. 1:1.

[3] David Syme Russell, The Jews from Alexander to Herod, The New Clarendon Bible: Old Testament, vol. 5 (Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 104.

The Jews were strong, for example, in Babylonia and Mesopotamia, where they had been deported in the eighth and sixth centuries B.C. They were numerically strong also in Syria, especially in Antioch and Damascus. According to Philo, Jews were ". . . very numerous in every city" in Syria and in Asia Minor.[3] Philo later tells us that Jews were dispersed into

> . . . Egypt, Phoenicia, the part of Syria called the Hollow and the rest as well and the lands lying far apart, Pamphylia, Cilicia, most of Asia up to Bithynia and the corners of Pontus, similarly also into Europe, Thessaly, Boeotia, Macedonia, Aetolia, Attica, Argos, Corinth and most of the best part of Peloponnese. And not only are the mainlands full of Jewish colonies but also the most highly esteemed of the islands Euboea, Cyprus, Crete. I say nothing of the countries beyond the Euphrates, for except for a small part they all. . . have Jewish inhabitants.[4]

Philo also records that there was a considerable Jewish community in Rome, ". . . most of whom were Roman citizens emancipated."[1] After the death of Herod the Great, Josephus reports that a group of fifty Jewish envoys to Rome were met there by more than 8000 Jews.[2]

---

[1] Josephus Jewish War (trans. Thackeray) 3. 3. 2.

[2] Philo Flaccus (trans. Colson) 6. 43.

[3] Philo The Embassy to Gaius (trans. F. H. Colson) 33. 245.

[4] Ibid., 36. 281-82.

By far the most important center of Diaspora Judaism was Egypt, especially Alexandria. Inscriptions and other archaeological evidence show that, while Jews were fairly numerous throughout all Egypt, it was in Alexandria that most of the Jewish people lived. Both culturally and religiously, Alexandrian Judaism was of the utmost importance and established itself as the recognized center of all western dispersion. For this reason, brief consideration will be given below to Philo Judaeus, the prime example of Alexandrian Judaism.

There were many reasons for the dispersion of Jewish people away from the homeland of Palestine. One factor already mentioned was war, with its resultant exiles of large portions of the Jewish population. Whole families were taken away from the familiar sites of Palestine and forced to adjust to completely new environments in strange lands. Involuntary dispersion was not the only reason, however. Periods of persecutions in Palestine created a strong desire within many Jews for new environments. The growth of world trade and the resultant economic incentives also motivated many Jews to move out of Palestine. The homeland was simply too small and too poor to sustain the increasing Jewish population.

---

[1] Ibid., 33. 155.

[2] Josephus *Jewish War* (trans. Thackeray) 2. 6. 1; cf. Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* (trans. Marcus) 17. 11. 1.

Unity in Dispersion

By the first century A.D., the five million Jews or more who lived outside Palestine far outnumbered their Palestinian kinsmen. Nevertheless, Judaism maintained an extraordinary sense of unity. This unity even in dispersion has captured the fascination of many historians, who have focused on reasons why Judaism could maintain such identity. One of the main reasons was the nature of the Jewish religion itself, with the synagogue as a central institution. Though Jerusalem was the sentimental homeplace of all Jews, Judaism was not restricted to a single geographical center. Although the temple in Jerusalem remained a pivotal point through annual feasts, sacrifices, and the half-shekel tax, the law and not the temple integrated Jews across the wide spance of the dispersion. The great religious coherence was maintained by an inner desire to remain faithful to the Torah.

The stubborn adherence of the Jews to the peculiar beliefs and practices of their faith usually resulted in the Jews of the dispersion dwelling apart from their neighbors in a separate quarter of a city or town. Often they formed a community within a community, while they maintained strong ties with other Jewish communities in Palestine and other areas. Although they regarded their new land as their homeland, Jews of the dispersion did not merge easily into the surrounding cultures. Their strong Judaistic heritage caused much resistance to social amalgamation, because they persisted in retaining strong ties with the temple and with their fellow Jews in Palestine. As Russell summarizes,

> They worshiped the same God, revered the same Book, obeyed the same laws, and shared the same Temple. Moreover, they acknowledged the High Priest in Jerusalem as their legitimate head, and looked to him to speak in their name and to enter into agreements with the secular authorities on their behalf. They paid their annual Temple tax regularly . . . and took part in pilgrimages to Jerusalem; they received deputations from synagogues elsewhere in the Dispersion and in Palestine itself by means of which views were exchanged and pledges of friendship renewed.[1]

Thus, a deep-rooted sense of Jewish brotherhood united them, especially in their common respect for Jewish law.

The synagogue was the chief vehicle for accomplishing this uniformity. By the time of the New Testament, probably every large city in the Roman empire had its local community of Jews with their own synagogue or synagogues. There were even synagogues for Diaspora Jews in Jerusalem itself. Acts 6:9 states that ". . . some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedman, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen." Although scattered into various areas and speaking different languages, the Hellenistic Jews maintained unity through the synagogue and their devotion to the law, both written and oral.

---

[1] Russell, Jews, p. 107.

The synagogue became the central point for Diaspora Jews, and it served a variety of functions in that regard. The synagogue was subject to the central Jewish authority, and it was unique in that it became almost synonymous with the Jewish community. It was the crossroads of Jewish life, where Jews met to exchange ideas, customs, and traditions. Jewish life, then, revolved around the synagogue.

Traditional Development of Hellenistic-Jewish Communities

The usual development of a Jewish community in Hellenistic areas proceeded somewhat along these lines. When the Jews first moved into a city, they assumed the role first as merely resident aliens or metics. As they became more numerous in a certain area, they would set up a synagogue, usually forming a private association for worship, as was the custom of other foreign groups. Such private associations were the regular channel by which foreigners entered their particular worship in a Greek city.[1] These associations had leaders (the "ruler of the synagogue" and others) to whom all disputes were submitted by Jews. This was in preference to the Greek courts. In many places, this privilege of forming a synagogue community with a self-governing principle became a civil right formally granted by the government and thus provided the political entity through which the Jewish people acted.[1] Once the Jews convinced the local rulers of their loyalty to government and of their devotion to law, the Jewish communities were granted the status of a legal religion with power to settle disputes between their members. On the whole, the Jews seem to have been favored by the Roman government. On occasions, this favoritism could have caused tension between Jews and their Gentile neighbors. At times Gentile contempt for Jews heightened the sense of Jewish isolation.

---

[1] Cf. William Tarn, Hellenistic Civilisation, 3rd ed. rev. author and G. T. Griffith (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1952), p. 338.

In some places[2] Jews were more formally organized into a _politeuma_ or corporation. This _politeuma_, which had a religious center with a council and magistrates, was a quasi-autonomous organization which became the instrument of incorporating in the city a group of foreigners without making them full citizens. The power of a _politeuma_ to manage its own internal and religious affairs may have restricted the Greek courts from jurisdiction over Jews. This also could have contributed to Greek hatred of Jews.

There is uncertainty over the status of Jews in some areas of dispersion regarding their citizenship. Many scholars have believed, following the statements of Josephus[3] that Jews as a body were full citizens in Alexandria, Antioch, and the cities of Ionia. It is impossible, however, to determine whether the Jews were full citizens or only recipients of privileges equivalent to citizenship. Certainly, some aspects of citizenship[1] would represent apostasy for a Jew; and it would, therefore, seem inconsistent that a Jew could be a full citizen. The publication in 1924 of Claudius' letter (A.D. 41-54) to the Alexandrines in H. I. Bell's Jews and Christians in Egypt[2] has convinced most scholars that the Jews were not full citizens of Alexandria.[3] This has given rise to various explanations of Josephus' claim of citizenship for them. There is also a difference of opinion among scholars as to whether or not Philo actually claimed Alexandrian citizenship for Jews.[4] Thus, the question of Jewish citizenship in Hellenistic cities remains a moot point.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 220.

[2] E.g., Alexandria and Antioch; cf. Josephus _Jewish Antiquities_ 20. 278-85, and Josephus _Jewish War_ 7. 43-53.

[3] See Josephus _Against Apion_ 2. 7, and Josephus _Jewish War_ 2. 487-88.

---

[1] E.g., worship of the city gods.

[2] Harold Idris Bell, ed., Jews and Christians in Egypt: The Jewish Troubles in Alexandria and the Athanasian Controversy, with 3 Coptic texts ed. W. E. Crum (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972), pp. 23-26.

[3] Cf. Robert Henry Pfeiffer, History of New Testament Times with an Introduction to the Apocrypha (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949), p. 173.

[4] Cf. Bell, ed., Jews and Christians, pp. 11-14; and Harry Austryn Wolfson, "Philo on Jewish Citizenship in Alexandria," Journal of Biblical Literature 63 (1944): 165-66.

UMI

There must have been some procedure, however, whereby certain individuals could become citizens, either by purchasing the status or as a reward for special services to the state. A classic example is the apostle Paul who, according to Acts 22:28, was born a Roman citizen. This means that he inherited Roman citizenship from his father. The extent of this citizenship and the manner in which his father received it are impossible to determine, but his citizenship has received much attention.[1]

A Divergent Development

The aforementioned development of Jewish communities in Hellenistic areas may be considered as the normal mode of emergence, but it is open to many inconsistencies, especially in a city like Corinth. The normal development may lead one to the conclusion that Jews developed isolated communities in Greek cities which had no contact with Hellenistic culture, but it would be a flagrant miscalculation to conceive of Jews having no contact with the outside world. Quite to the contrary, the Jews were inevitably influenced by their existence in the midst of a Gentile world. They were caught up in the general culture and beliefs of their neighbors. While maintaining religious kinship with Jewish brethren in other cities, some Jewish communities diverged greatly from the main stream of Israel's historic faith.[1] What is surprising is that Jews maintained as much uniformity as they did in the midst of Greek influence, since they were affected at almost every point of their existence. They pursued the same trades and occupations, they were under the same economic and religious influences, and they came into contact with the same philosophical concepts; all of which caused them to re-formulate those same beliefs in new directions. Thus, Jews could think of λόγος or σοφία with new Hellenistic understanding.

---

[1] Cf. Henry Joel Cadbury, The Book of Acts in History (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1955), pp. 65-82; William Mitchell Ramsay, The Cities of St. Paul: Their Influence on His Life and Thought (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), pp. 205-214; and Donald Joseph Selby, Toward the Understanding of St. Paul (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 128-32.

The most obvious and inescapable Hellenistic influence on Jews was the widespread use of the Greek language. Koine Greek developed as the common medium of conversation in the eastern Mediterranean area. As early as the third century B.C., Jews in Egypt had adopted this common language to the extent that it was necessary to translate the Pentateuch into Greek and later to translate the rest of the Old Testament into Greek for the benefit of Greek-speaking Jews. This well-known Septuagint version has been called ". . . the most significant translation in the history of our western civilization,"[2] and is a classic example of Greek influence on Diaspora Jews.

---

[1] Cf. Henry Jackson Flanders, Jr., Robert Wilson Crapps, and David Anthony Smith, People of the Covenant: An Introduction to the Old Testament, 2nd ed. (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1973), pp. 451-53.

[2] Frank C. Porter, "Primitive Christianity and Judaism: A Symposium, Part A: The Problem of Things New and Old in

This influence was reciprocal, however, for the Jews attracted many Gentiles to their religion. Even without missionaries seeking to convert the Gentiles, the Jews had inestimable influence on their neighbors. By their daily conduct and contacts and by the presence of their synagogues which were open to Gentiles, the Jews attracted many Gentiles to their monotheistic faith. Thus, though some Gentiles had an extreme contempt for Jews, others had the highest admiration for their Jewish neighbors.[1]

This counter-influence has not been universally recognized, partly because it is not apparent in most of the literature of that time. Generally, the references to Jews during the Hellenistic and Roman periods are negative, revealing much contempt and scorn. As has been pointed out,

> Very few Greek or Roman writers had a civil word to say for the Jews. They charged the Jews with having contributed nothing to invention, art or culture, and poured scorn upon their claims to superiority.[2]

Jewish influence appeared stronger among the lower classes, which explains why the influence was not as pronounced as it would have been had it appealed more to men of high

---

the Beginnings of Christianity," Journal of Biblical Literature 48 (1949):11 (hereafter "Things New and Old").

[1] Pfeiffer, History, p. 190.

[2] George Hogarth Carnaby Macgregor and Alexander Converse, Jew and Greek: Tutors unto Christ: The Jewish and Hellenistic Background of the New Testament, The International Library of Christian Knowledge, ed. William Adams Brown and Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 152.

education, breeding, and wealth. Had it appealed more to those of affluence, documentation and favorable reactions would have been more expected.

Jews were careful in areas of dispersion to point out to their Gentile neighbors Jewish beliefs and doctrines bearing similarity to the most respected Hellenistic teachings. This religious stance enjoyed precedence over a claim to national exclusiveness and afforded an open door to Gentiles. Therefore, appearing to Gentiles as a philosophical system and an Oriental religion offering life, Judaism became increasingly attractive to Gentiles.[1]

Some Gentiles became proselytes to Judaism, while others remained on the outer fringes as mere adherents or sympathizers. The latter who did not take the full step toward becoming proselytes were called "fearers of God" or "worshipers of God," titles referring to devout, God-fearing people who worshiped and honored the Jewish God.[2] These Gentile sympathizers were attracted by Jewish monotheism with its resultant rejection of idolatry, polytheism, and immorality; but they objected to circumcision and Jewish citizenship. Therefore, they did not take the final steps required of true proselytes. Josephus[1] and the Book of Acts[2] tell us that these "God-fearers" constituted a significant portion of the synagogue congregations. Such sympathizers may have constituted a conspicuous part of the Corinthian synagogue.

---

[1] Pfeiffer, History, pp. 192-94.

[2] Cf. George Foot Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927-30), 1:339-41; Joseph Klausner, From Jesus to Paul, trans. William F. Stinespring (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1944), pp. 40-49; and Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, 2 vols., Structure and Growth of Philosophical Systems from Plato to Spinoza (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), 2:373.

Although, theoretically, the Jews could have isolated themselves from Gentile culture and preserved their religion uncontaminated by paganism, the Jews found that Greek civilization influenced them greatly. Through daily contact with a more refined culture than their own, the Jews gradually retreated from a segregation stance and became more and more influenced by the Greek world. In addition, this point of contact allowed much more Jewish influence on the eclectic spirit of the Gentiles. A mutual influence has long been recognized. Wilfred L. Knox, for example, laid stress upon it as early as 1925;[3] but only in recent years has this understanding grown in acceptance. Thus, D. E. H. Whitely can speak of the ". . . contemporary tendency to abandon the old dichotomy between Jewish and Hellenistic thought."[4]

---

[1] Josephus Jewish War 7. 50-52.

[2] E.g., 13:16, 26, 43; 17:4, 17; cf. 10:2, 22; 16:14.

[3] Wilfred Lawrence Knox, St. Paul and the Church of Jerusalem (Cambridge: University Press, 1925), p. 126.

[4] Denys Edward Hugh Whitely, The Theology of St. Paul (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), p. 5.

The physical contact of two cultures in various localities produced varying relationships and differing degrees of mutual influence. The possibility of extensive influence of Greek concepts upon Jews in Corinth exists because of the obvious contact of cultures. Thus, Guignebert can assess the principal consequences of this influence of Jewish and Gentile cultures upon each other:

> (1) There grew up a Hellenized Judaism favorable to Greek philosophy.
> (2) As the result of this internal transformation, a spirit of propaganda developed among the Hellenized Jews.
> (3) A syncretism, at once intellectual and religious, gradually developed, resulting, after various vicissitudes, in the creation of sects and fostered the development of a Jewish gnosis.[1]

Philo Judaeus

The most important example of Hellenistic Judaism is Philo Judaeus. This man is representative of the influence that Hellenism exerted on Jews. Philo lived in Alexandria at the beginning of the Christian era, when that city was at the peak of its cultural and intellectual development. Although a contemporary of Jesus and Paul, Philo reveals no knowledge of or dependence upon Christianity. His intention was to Judaize the Hellenistic world, but he was rejected by normative Judaism ". . . because they judged that such efforts as his involved instead a Hellenizing of Judaism."[2]

---

[1] Guignebert, Jewish World, p. 222.

[2] Porter, "Things New and Old," p. 12.

Philo indeed found affinities between Judaism and the philosophies of his Alexandrian environment, particularly the teachings of Plato and the Stoics. Philo's key to reconciliation lay in his allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures. In this way, he could read Moses in terms of Plato, and Plato in terms of Moses; and before long, he could conclude that each had said essentially the same things.

Little is known about Philo's personal life. He was a wealthy, open-minded Jew who was involved virtually in all that was a part of Alexandria. He concerned himself with politics, philosophy, the arts, sports, and social life. Philo rarely refers to his personal life, but some passages reveal pictures of his character and attitude toward life. For example, Philo wrote:

> There was a time when I had leisure for philosophy and for the contemplation of the universe and its contents, when I made its spirit my own in all its beauty and loveliness and true blessedness, when my constant companions were divine themes and verities, wherein I rejoiced with a joy that never cloyed or sated. I had no base or abject thoughts or grovelled in search of reputation or of wealth or bodily comforts, but seemed always to be borne aloft into the heights with a soul possessed by some God-sent inspiration, a fellow-traveller with the sun and moon and the whole heaven and universe. Ah then I gazed down from the upper air, and straining the mind's eye beheld, as from some commanding peak, the multitudinous world-wide spectacles of earthly things, and blessed my lot in that I had escaped by main force from the plagues of mortal life. But, as it proved, my steps were dogged by the deadliest of mischiefs, the hater of the good, envy, which suddenly set upon me and ceased not to pull me down with violence till it had plunged me in the ocean of civil cares, in which I am swept away, unable even to raise my head above the

> water. Yet amid my groans I hold my own, for, planted in my soul from my earliest days I keep the yearning for culture which ever has pity and compassion for me, lifts me up and relieves my pain. To this I owe it that sometimes I raise my head and with the soul's eye--dimly indeed because the mist of extraneous affairs has clouded their clear vision--I yet make shift to look around me in my desire to inhale a breath of life pure and unmixed with evil. And if unexpectedly I obtain a spell of fine weather and a calm from civil turmoils, I get me wings and ride the waves and almost tread the lower air, wafted by the breezes of knowledge which often urges me to come to spend my days with her, a truant as it were from merciless masters in the shape not only of men but of affairs, which pour in upon me like a torrent from different sides. Yet it is well for me to give thanks to God even for this, that though submerged I am not sucked down into the depths, but can also open the soul's eyes, which in my despair of comforting hope I thought had now lost their sight, and am irradiated by the light of wisdom, and am not given over to lifelong darkness. So behold me daring, not only to read the sacred messages of Moses, but also in my love of knowledge to peer into each of them and unfold and reveal what is not known to the multitude.[1]

Here Philo expresses personal motivation to venture out and discover affinities with the culture of his day. He is "submerged" in the "ocean of civil cares," but is motivated to lift his head to the higher planes and discover new knowledge in the traditions of sacred literature.

It is unnecessary for our purposes here to discuss Philo's many-sided contribution to various fields of thought, but it is helpful to remember that here was one who could blend Judaism with Hellenistic environment. Although unconscious of any disloyalty to Judaism, he ventured out into the syncretistic world in ways that diverged from traditional Judaism. Thus, Philo illustrates the tendency so common in his day to relate two cultures into a workable relationship. His life reveals the inevitable influence that each culture must exert upon the other. As a prolific writer, his treatises must have formed almost a library in themselves. These writings reveal a divided loyalty between Jewish and Hellenistic thought, which were never adequately related. Perhaps this is why Philo can be called both a Hellenized Jew and a Judaized Hellenist. E. R. Goodenough unveils this divided loyalty when he says:

---

[1] Philo _The Special Laws_ (trans. F. H. Colson) 3. 1-6.

> With a profound loyalty to the Bible which insists upon the sanctity of the very letter, with a loyalty to the Jewish law which shows he must have been a carefully observant Jew, Philo shows a veritable obsession with the ideas of the Greek civilization about him.[1]

The importance of Philo for this study is in the response he made to his world. He illustrates the fact that Jews in various areas of dispersion sought to blend themselves into Hellenistic culture. For expedience' sake, they emphasized similarities and sought to reconcile Jewish traditions with Hellenistic concepts. That the response to Hellenistic culture could be dictated by expedience is illustrated in this lengthy, but intriguing passage from Philo:

> And surely that is natural, for the man of worth who surveys, not only human life but all the phenomena

---

[1] Erwin R. Goodenough, An Introduction to Philo Judaeus, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), p. 9.

UMI

of the world, knows how mightily blow the winds of necessity, fortune, opportunity, force, violence and princedom, and how many are the projects, how great the good fortunes which soar to heaven without pausing in their flight and then are shaken about and brought crashing to the ground by these blasts. And therefore he must needs take caution to shield him, as an inseparable safeguard to prevent any grave disaster suddenly befalling him, for caution is to the individual man what a wall is to a city. Surely then they are all lunatics and madmen who take pains to display untimely frankness, and sometimes dare to oppose kings and tyrants in words and deeds. They do not perceive that not only like cattle are their necks under the yoke, but that the harness extends to their whole bodies and souls, their wives and children and parents, and the wide circle of friends and kinsfolk united to them by fellowship of feeling, and that the driver can with perfect ease spur, drive on or pull back, and mete out any treatment small or great just as he pleases. And therefore they are branded and scourged and mutilated and undergo a combination of all the sufferings which merciless cruelty can inflict short of death, and finally, are led away to death itself.

These are the rewards of untimely free-speaking, which in the eyes of sensible judges is not free-speaking at all; rather they are the guerdons of silliness and frenzy and incurable brain-sickness. Why? Who if he sees a storm at its height, a fierce counter-wind, a hurricane swooping down and a tempest-tossed sea, sets sail and puts out to sea when he should remain in harbour? What pilot or skipper was ever so utterly intoxicated as to wish to sail with all these terrors launched upon him, only to find the ship water-logged by the down-rushing sea and swallowed up, crew and all. For he who would have a safe voyage can always wait for the sunny breeze to take him gently and smoothly on his way. Again, would anyone who has seen a bear or a lion or wild boar sweeping along to attack him, instead of soothing and calming them as he should, provoke them to savagery just to offer himself as a banquet to satisfy the cruel appetites of the carnivorous brutes? As well might we think it advisable to fight against the stinging scorpions and asps of Egypt and all other creatures possessed of fatal poison whose single bite carries with it inevitable death--creatures whom we may well be content to tame with charms and ensure that they do us no grievous harm. Then are there not some men more fierce and malicious than boars, scorpions or asps, men whose spite and malice can only be avoided by using some method of taming and soothing them?

> And therefore we shall find wise Abraham doing obeisance to the sons of Cheth (Gen. xxiii. 7), whose name means "removing," when the fitness of the circumstances prompted him to do so. For it was not out of any feeling of respect for those who by nature and race and custom were the enemies of reason, who remove instruction, the true coinage of the soul, and change it into petty coins and waste it miserably, that he brought himself to do obeisance. Rather it was just because he feared their power at the time and their formidable strength and took care to give no provocation, that he will win that great and secure possession, that prize of virtue, the double cave which is the most excellent abiding-place of wise souls: the cave which could not be won by war and fighting, but by shewing subservience and paying court to their unreason. Again, do not we too, when we are spending time in the market-place, make a practice of standing out of the path of our rulers and also of beasts of carriage, though our motive in the two cases is entirely different? With the rulers it is done to shew them honour, with the animals from fear and to save us from suffering serious injury from them. And if ever occasions permit it is good to subdue the violence of enemies by attack, but if they do not permit the safe course is to keep quiet, and if we wish to gain any help from them the fitting course is to soften and tame them.[1]

A Proposed Reconstruction in Corinth

The exclusiveness of the Jewish community, even in areas of dispersion, has long been stressed. The reasons for this sense of isolation and aloofness among Jewish people in pagan areas have received much attention. As commonly assumed, many Jews maintained a consistent attitude of suspicion and hostility toward anything Gentile. Likewise, many Gentiles have been noted for their anti-Semitism.[2]

As already mentioned, this sharp distinction between Jews and Gentiles increasingly has been challenged. While it may be true that there was little conscious borrowing between the two, scholarship has recognized many involuntary influences on both sides. Two cultures cannot have so co-existed without a slow penetration of influence upon each other. This mutual influence must have been an inevitable and probably unconscious result of integrating these two cultures in various localities. The contamination of Jewish ideals by Gentile attitudes was taking place long before the first century A.D. The Old Testament prophets had rebuked their people for this tendency to allow themselves to be affected by paganism.[1] The degree of separation from Jerusalem and the temple perhaps would influence the amount of resistance to this mutual exchange.

---

[1] Philo On Dreams (trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker) 2. 81-92.

[2] Guignebert, Jewish World, p. 238.

The strategic location of Corinth provided an opportunity for rapid growth through an influx of various peoples. By the time of Paul's visit, Corinthians were exploiting the advantages of their location. Commerce between Rome and the East was beneficial to the economy and growth of the city. The large groups that gathered on the Isthmus every other year for the celebration of the Isthmian games also provided stimulus for increased interaction. An outward sign of the well-disciplined government utilizing this strategic situation is the amount of town-planning and building going on during this period. By A.D 20 or 30, Corinth was, according to W. Rees, ". . . a

---

[1] E.g., Jer. 7:17-18, 44:17-19; Ezek. 8:14.

UMI

thriving city of splendid or at least imposing appearance, and well-populated, though still smaller than old Corinth.[1]

Jews seemed to have settled at Corinth from an early date; and in time, they seem to have become fairly numerous. At any rate, an inscription which stood over the door of a synagogue has been found, with the words, "Synagogue of the Hebrews." The poor spelling and rudely cut letters may indicate that this was the first poor synagogue erected by Jews in Corinth. Probably one or two other synagogues followed in time.[2]

Although these Jews were cognizant of the fact that chastity was a cardinal virtue of Judaism,[3] they were quickly brought into contact with the powerful influence of immorality in Corinth. Without putting Corinth in a morally void class by herself,[4] one must remember that Corinth was a known center of immorality. Corinth had developed an immoral reputation to the extent that words derived from the name "Corinth" seem to have been used in the Old Comedy with the meaning, "to practice fornication."[5] As Cumont has pointed out, "The laxity of morals at the beginning of our era has been exaggerated, but it was real."[1] It would be quite idealistic to think that Jews in Corinth were untouched by such immoral influences in Corinth. With the apparent reign of debauchery in Corinth, Jews would be faced with the stimulating option of conforming to the desires of their instincts instead of to the dictates of their laws. Denial of any influence of Hellenistic ethics upon Jews in Corinth is difficult to maintain, especially since obvious ways in which this influence was conveyed can be isolated.

---

[1] W. Rees, "Corinth in St. Paul's Time," Scripture 2 (1947):107.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Cf. Moore, Judaism, 2:267f.

[4] Perhaps one should heed the conclusion of Edwin Hatch in his The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity (New York: Harper & Bros., 1957), p. 139, that ". . . it is questionable whether the average morality of civilized ages has largely varied."

[5] Cf. Charles Kingsley Barrett, A Commentary on the

For one thing, Jews were in contact with the Gentiles in the trade market. The reason why many Jews were living in Corinth was based upon an economic motivation to make a comfortable living for their families. Many times expedience takes precedence over ethical considerations when one's livelihood is at stake. Jews would readily relate to their Gentile neighbors rather than claiming exclusiveness. Economic concerns demanded this, and much influence was transferred in this way.

First Epistle to the Corinthians, Harper's New Testament Commentaries, gen. ed. Henry Chadwick (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 2; Conzelmann, I Corinthians, p. 12; and Frederik Willem Grosheide, Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, gen. ed. Frederick Fyvie Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), p. 14.

[1] Franz Cumont, The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism, with an Introductory Essay by Grant Showerman (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1911), p. 42.

Mixed marriages also provided a medium through which Hellenistic thought patterns invaded Jewish ranks. Occasionally a Jew would marry a non-Jew, a relationship which opened a channel for understanding between the cultures. Free interchange of concepts would be shared in these new relationships. No one knows the extent of these marriages; but we do know that they did take place, even though they were prohibited.[1] These marriages certainly promoted a constant interchange between Hellenistic and Jewish beliefs.

The synagogue was the most significant place for exchanging ideas. Since the synagogue was a meeting-place and classroom for both Jews and proselytes, an opportunity for interchange was made available. Proselytes at various degrees of conversion brought to the synagogue their Hellenistic culture and background. The deeply rooted beliefs and concepts of Hellenism inevitably found expression as Jews sought to inject their doctrines into Gentiles. These proselytes had inestimable influence on the pure Jews, who sought to complete the conversion of these Gentiles to Jewish concepts. Compromises between doctrines would invariably produce faster results in conversion. Thus, the center of Jewish life became a crossroads for two cultures.

Defining what is Jewish and what is Gentile in first-century Corinth may not be as easy, then, as some assume. Thus, in the sections concerning sexual license in I Corinthians, the mere reference to prostitutes may not be an immediate signal of a Gentile audience and certainly not of a rationalization along specific Gnostic lines. The slogan "all things are permissible for me," which implies that the Corinthians claimed the authority to do anything and that they were not bound by law, may not necessarily point to a Gentile congregation. This antinomian position would easily fit a Gentile libertine, but it could also fit a Jewish-Christian libertine. Consequently, it could fit a Jewish Christian who had developed an understanding that his new relationship with Jesus Christ freed him from the restrictions of his background in the law. The licentious life of some Gentiles could have exerted a strong influence on some Jews. Under such influence, a practical and expedient ethic could be adopted and rationalized by theological doctrine. Since this practice has been repeated a number of times in history, it can serve as a warning against the simple assumption that such was solely a strictly Gentile problem. With the fusion of two cultures, this may point just as easily to a perverted Jewish background which was directly at odds with Paul's gospel.

---

[1] Guignebert, Jewish World, p. 239.

The dualistic interpretation of man so evident in I Cor. 6:12-20 is also said to be a clear indication that Paul has in mind Gentile opposition.[1] This understanding that the body has no part in the spiritual realm seems blatantly inconsistent with the Jewish concept of a unified man. To some, this is positive evidence that the fornicators were using non-Jewish, dualistic thought patterns. Thus, Paul urges them to formulate a unified view of man, since the opponents are supporting a dualistic view.

---

[1] E.g., Héring, First Corinthians, p. 44.

While this may be a Hellenistic concept of dualism, it does not provide decisive evidence that the opponents are Gentile Gnostics, for Hellenistic Jews could have used this Hellenistic concept. No one knows to what extent the Diaspora Jews were influenced, and it is conceivable to imagine that some Jews were misdirected in their basic understanding of man. With the acceptance of the claims of Jesus Christ, a radical change in understanding could have taken place. Some Jews converted to the gospel of Christ did not adhere so consistently to their Jewish background, as did the apostle Paul. Some abandoned their original messianic understanding to formulate a belief that the new age had already begun in Jesus Christ.

This problem is reflected in I Cor. 4:6-21, where the eschatological tone seems to pervade the passage. In verse 8, the key word is "already," where Paul reflects what some Corinthians were claiming that already they were reigning. This was the claim of some Corinthians; for if they were not making the claim, Paul would not have used his strong argument concerning the apostles against them.[1]

---

[1] I Cor. 4:9-13.

The Corinthians were acting as if the age to come were already consummated. They were behaving as if they had already taken over the kingdom of God. As Barrett states, "For them there is no 'not yet' to qualify the 'already' of realized eschatology."[1] The Corinthians were convinced that they already had part in God's sovereignty. Their spiritual pride had caused them to believe that they had the parousia and judgment behind them. Paul, however, claims superior knowledge over the Corinthians in that he holds that they are not ruling yet (even though he wishes they did reign). In order to keep them from exceeding what is written, Paul simply tells them that Christians are not ruling yet.

This claim to be ruling already may be a key to the erroneous eschatology of the Corinthians. Since the Corinthians were assuming that their reign had already begun, then the fact that their bodies had not changed could lead them to the logical conclusion that the body has no part in the kingdom reign. This is a reason for the extensive argument concerning bodily resurrection in chapter 15. There Paul lays great stress upon the resurrection of the body. This is in contradistinction to those who believed that they were already reigning and that their physical bodies must, therefore, have no part in the kingdom. These Christian converts with their fully realized eschatology could just as easily be Jewish as Gentile.

---

[1] Barrett, First Corinthians, p. 109.

UMI

If the majority of the Corinthian Christians are Jewish in background, then the dualistic thought of Hellenism could provide an expedient way to justify their unchanged bodies in the new aeon. It is possible, then, that a Hellenistic thought pattern evident in I Corinthians may have developed within a predominantly Jewish congregation. This possibility is not conclusive; but it does demand that the interpreter approach the various passages in I Corinthians with openness, rather than with a predetermined conclusion that these opponents must obviously be Gentile Gnostics. This possibility demands also a careful examination of the texts to determine if there are any indications concerning the background of the group which Paul has in mind. To this end, attention will be focused in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

TEXTUAL EVIDENCE FOR THE APPROPRIATE BACKGROUND

Introduction

While the authenticity of I Corinthians is universally recognized,[1] its integrity is frequently questioned. Literary criticism has provided evidence for such skepticism in the loose construction, the sudden transitions, and the divergent situations that are seemingly apparent. This has led commentators to suggest various letters of Paul to Corinth (usually four in number) which would correspond to a reconstructed history of Paul's relationship to the Corinthians as far as available information is concerned.

The first letter of Paul to Corinth is apparently referred to in I Cor. 5:9, where Paul wrote, ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι πόρνοις. As has often been noted, ἔγραψα ὑμῖν can be translated as a completed action (i.e., "I wrote you") or as an epistolary aorist (i.e.,

---

[1] Cf. Héring, First Corinthians, p. xii; Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, ed. Samuel Rolles Driver, Alfred Plummer, and Charles Augustus Briggs (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), pp. xvi-xix; Richard Charles Henry Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1946), p. 7; and Conzelmann, I Corinthians, p. 2.

"I am writing you") which represents action completed from the point of view of the reader. J. B. Lightfoot, however, summarized the main viewpoint favoring a "previous letter" and a completed-action understanding of the verb when he said:

> . . . as undue weight has been assigned to these words, as showing that a previous letter had been written, it will be as well to see how far they favour such a view. . . . No such conclusion can be drawn from the aorist to the letter in which it occurs, any concordance will show. . . .
>
> The only substantial argument in favor of a previous letter seems to be contained in the words ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ, which are quite superfluous in reference to the First Epistle itself, and the comparison to 2 Cor. vii. 8 makes the allusion to a previous letter even more evident. This argument appears to be insuperable.[1]

This position is generally accepted today. Most scholars, therefore, believe that before the writing of I Corinthians, Paul had written the Corinthian church at least once.

Furthermore, in Paul's earliest dealings and correspondence with Corinth, sexual license among Corinthians was a source of trouble. As far as can be known, Paul's "previous letter" had one topic or one main subject, namely the appeal μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι πόρνοις.[2] His plea to avoid fornicators demonstrates that this was perhaps the first problem to erupt in the Corinthian church to work against Paul's presentation of the gospel. Before there is any evidence of various factions,[1] there is clear indication that fornication was already a root problem. If sexual libertinism was indeed the original and perhaps primary source of difficulty in Paul's earliest opposition in Corinth, then its origin would provide a key to the identity of his opponents.

---

[1] Joseph Barber Lightfoot, Biblical Essays (London: Macmillan & Co., 1893), pp. 275-76; cf. Lightfoot, Notes, p. 207; Johannes Weiss, Der erste Korintherbrief (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), p. 138; Frederick Fyvie Bruce, I and II Corinthians, New Century Bible, ed. Ronald E. Clements and Matthew Black (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1971), p. 23; Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings, rev. ed., s.v. "First Letter to the Corinthians," by Erich Dinkler.

[2] I Cor. 5:9.

With this knowledge, the biblical reader is not surprised to discover fornication mentioned in I Corinthians. The most important reference is in I Cor. 6:12-20. A longer and more specific reference is the example of fornication given in I Cor. 5. Other possible references to the presence of sexual immorality in Corinth occur in chapters 7 and 11. Based upon previous observations that either a Gentile Gnostic or an esoteric Jewish milieu could be in the background of this development, the texts themselves must be examined to discover any clues as to the identity of the situation Paul had in mind when he wrote I Corinthians.

Who were these fornicators and how could a Christian rationalize his sexual immorality with his faith? These modern questions cannot be answered in a definitive way, but the texts do offer some implications for this study. Although some speculation must accompany these implications, this is necessary to uncover the identity of Paul's opponents in a satisfactory manner.

---

[1] Cf. I Cor. 1:12.

The Previous Letter

While all indications are that Paul wrote a letter to Corinth prior to I Corinthians, the contents of that letter are not so obvious. The only issue known to have been mentioned in that letter was the relationship of believers to fornicators. In his reference to this earlier letter, Paul recalls that he had espoused the principle of no association with fornicators. Paul implies in I Cor. 5:10 that he has knowledge of the way the Corinthians have misinterpreted the principle. For this reason, he seeks to re-explain his view. Paul's first reference to fornication is in the previous letter and his clarifying statement is in I Corinthians. Apparently, Paul had warned the Corinthian Christians not to associate with immoral people. This word of caution was then understood to mean that they should have no dealings with the world. Paul, however, clarifies this by telling them not to associate with immoral Christians.

The essence of the first statement is given as μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι πόρνοις. The combination of two prepositions with the infinitive μίγνυσθαι is very expressive, which might literally be translated "mix yourselves up with." It especially denotes not only close, but habitual contact or intercourse.[1] The present middle infinitive as negated here, "do not mingle yourselves with," needs a dative object, which is supplied in the term πόρνοις. This is a general term for harlots, prostitutes, or those who practice sexual immorality.[1]

---

[1] Marvin Richardson Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (Wilmington, Del.: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1972), p. 769.

Paul's admonition in the earlier letter was simply stated, but it was open to ambiguity and misrepresentation by the Corinthians. From our point of view, it seems that Paul was exhorting the Corinthians to avoid all direct contact with sexually immoral people. This at least provides ample reasoning for Paul to condemn the church for its continued contact with the immoral offender in I Cor. 5.

While many scholars are willing to conclude simply that this previous letter is now lost,[2] others are quick to suggest that parts of this letter are still extant. While various theories of reconstruction differ, all seem to agree that II Cor. 6:14-7:1 would be a part of any reconstructed letter. Some commentators like Craig, Dean, Henshaw, Héring, and Strachan[3] find fragments of this letter only in this section; but others, like Dinkler, Schmithals, and Weiss[1] find fragments in other sections. For this study, it should be noted that I Cor. 6:12-20 is included by these three men as a part of the previous letter.

---

[1] For a fuller treatment of the concept of this term, see pp. 130ff.

[2] E.g., John James Lias, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, with Notes, Map, Introduction and Appendices, Cambridge Greek Bible for Schools and Colleges, gen. ed. J. J. S. Perowne (Cambridge: University Press, 1892), p. 70; Kümmel, re-ed., Introduction to the New Testament, pp. 203-204; Bruce, I and II Corinthians, p. 23; Lenski, First and Second Corinthians, p. 15; and Meyer, Corinthian Epistles, 1:6.

[3] Clarence Tucker Craig, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians," The Interpreter's Bible, 12 vols., gen ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953),

If II Cor. 6:14-7:1 can be dated early and is a part of the lost letter, as many suggest, there are implications for this study. Paul's emphasis in this passage is to show the inconsistency of believers aligning themselves with unbelievers. He does not specifically state here what is meant by "do not be bound together with unbelievers," but his general treatment certainly includes such an important matter as marriage between believers and non-believers. This broad statement is open to serious misinterpretations, namely that Paul is promoting total isolationism. If this is, indeed, part of the previous letter, then we can understand why Paul would need to clarify his position in a later letter. At any rate, the message of the previous letter was related by the Corinthians to association with immoral people.

10:6; John Taylor Dean, Saint Paul and Corinth (London: Lutterworth Press, 1947), p. 11; Thomas Henshaw, New Testament Literature in the Light of Modern Scholarship (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952), p. 242; Héring, First Corinthians, p. xii; and Robert Harvey Strachan, The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, The Moffatt New Testament Commentaries, ed. James Moffatt (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), pp. xiv-xxi.

[1] Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings, rev. ed., s.v. "First Letter to the Corinthians," by Erich Dinkler; Schmithals, Gnosticism in Corinth, p. 95; and Johannes Weiss, The History of Primitive Christianity, comp. Rudolf Knopf, trans. F. C. Grant et al., ed. Frederick C. Grant, 2 vols. (New York: Wilson-Erickson, 1937), 1:323ff.

If this passage can speak to our understanding of Paul's opponents in I Corinthians, then the implications are clear that Paul was envisioning a Jewish-dominated audience. His opening statement is reminiscent of an Old Testament metaphor where two animals work under a common yoke. Paul's image here draws upon an understanding of the prohibition in Deut. 22:10, "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together," and is influenced by the prohibition of hybrid breeding of animals in Lev. 19:19.[1] Paul is utilizing his own background, but calls upon the readers' comprehension of such language.

The incongruity of believers being joined with unbelievers is further developed in verse 14 through two antitheses: righteousness with lawlessness, and light with darkness. The first antithesis is found over in a decidedly Jewish-oriented book, Hebrews, as a quote from Ps. 45:7: "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness."[2] This quote explains the Messiah's attitudes to these opposites. The antinomian position of Paul's opponents may be implied here. The second antithesis reveals a basic contradiction between light and darkness. This reminds one of the dualism so evident in the Gospel of John.[1]

---

[1] John James Lias, The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians with Notes and Introduction, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge University Press, 1892), pp. 83-84: "The reference in the word ἑτεροζυγοῦντες is to the precepts in Lev. xix. 19 and Deut. xxii. 10, precepts, like many similar ones in the same chapter (vv. 9, 11, 12) and elsewhere in the Mosaic laws, manifestly figurative in their character."

[2] Heb. 1:9.

Paul's point is more explicit in verse 15. First he shows the absurdity of linking Christ with Satan; and then he again stresses, "What has a believer in common with an unbeliever?" The most interesting aspect of this verse is Paul's choice of βελίαρ. Since there is a tendency in language to make ρ and λ interchangeable, Meyer and Plummer[2] suggest that this happened in the Greek with the final consonant of Belial. Belial was a recognized name in Paul's day for Satan. The term is found in the Old Testament with such meaning.[3] This is the only occurrence in the New Testament as a name for Satan. Belial is a Hebrew word in origin meaning, as generally understood, "worthlessness."[4] This antithesis is used again in one of the later Jewish books: ʼΕκλέξασθε ἑαυτοῖς ἤ τὸ φῶς ἤ τὸ σκότος ἤ τὸν νόμον κυρίου, ἢ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ βελίαρ.[5] Paul's reference here to Belial is another indication of the audience he had in mind since this is his only use of the term for Satan.

---

[1] E.g., John 8:12; 9:5; 3:19: 1:4f.

[2] Meyer, Corinthian Epistles, 2:314; Alfred Plummer, ed., The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: University Press, 1911), p. 64.

[3] E.g., Judg. 19:22; I Sam. 2:12.

[4] Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, gen. ed. Frederick Fyvie Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), p. 249.

[5] Testament of Levi 19:1b.

In verse 16, the temple and idolatry are introduced. The use of the question in his argumentation suggests a positive agreement. The Corinthians should know that no possible agreement can be found between the temple of God and idols. This draws upon one of the themes Paul uses here to undergird his defense, i.e., holiness. This theme is developed along traditional Jewish lines.

The temple of God is a holy place and has no place for compromise with idols. Hughes explains the significance here:

> To the Jew, with his strictly spiritual and monotheistic knowledge of God, idols were an abomination (cf. Rom. 2:22), for idolatry was not only the infringement of the second commandment of the decalogue, but also the deletion of the absolute distinction between the Creator and His creatures. The temple at Jerusalem was, accordingly, entirely free of any kind of graven image or idol. The Jewish abhorrence of idols was spontaneously demonstrated by the display of open consternation when, some twenty years before the writing of our epistle, the Emperor Caligula promulgated an edict requiring his bust to be set up and worshipped in the temple and in all synagogues. Submission to such a demand would for the Jew have been an act of inconceivable blasphemy, such as to cause the temple to cease from being God's temple and to become a centre of profanity. The antipathy between God's temple and idols was radical and absolute.[1]

Drawing upon this understanding, Paul presses his argument to show his readers that he is speaking in a personal sense. The emphasis, of course, is on the first word: ἡμεῖς γὰρ ναὸς θεοῦ ἐσμεν ζῶντος. If it was unbearable for a constructed temple to have association with idols, how much more should an individual avoid any such idols? Paul's choice of ναός is significant in that it emphasizes the holiness of the individual believer.[1]

---

[1] Hughes, Second Corinthians, p. 251.

Paul seeks then to authenticate what he has been saying by reference to a chain of Old Testament texts. He, of course, looks to the Old Testament as a source of authority; but it may be assumed appropriately that he would not have drawn from such an authority if it were virtually unknown to his readers. The use of Jewish Scriptures as authority suggests strongly that Paul expected his readers to comprehend his meaning. The exegesis of these various quotations is not important for our purpose here, except to say that they stress the holiness concept so prevalent in Judaism. Scripture is reinforced by other Scriptures as Paul seeks to authenticate his claim.

In verse 1 of chapter 7, he draws his conclusion. Drawing upon these statements and promises from the Old Testament, he exhorts the Corinthians to cleanse themselves "from all defilement of flesh and spirit." The result that he gives is significant: "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Here again Paul is drawing upon the Hebraic concept of holiness and reverence before God which is a focal point in much of the Old Testament.[2]

---

[1] See the fuller treatment of this term on p. 134.

[2] Cf. Strachan, Second Corinthians, p. 6.

While it is not the intention of the present author to determine if this passage is a fragment of the previous letter, it is appropriate for this study to note that many do see the passage as such. If this is the case, then this text would help in the understanding of the background of I Corinthians. It would point us to a predominant Jewish group, for Paul's use of Hebraic terms, concepts, quotations, and authority would have spoken more pointedly to those trained in Judaism than to those trained in Gnosticism.

I Cor. 6:12-20

Exegesis

The most general and, as foreshadowed, the most important reference to the problem of sexual license is found in I Cor. 6:12-20. This passage can offer forceful insight into the situation which Paul had in mind. The way he introduces this section on the general theme of fornication has led most commentators[1] to the conclusion that he is quoting Corinthian words or slogans.[2] This scholarly conclusion is evident in many modern translations which use quotation marks around these slogans.[3] While most commentators recognize the presence of slogans here, there is no universal agreement as to the extent of the slogans.

---

[1] Hurd, in his The Origin of I Corinthians, p. 68, documents this majority opinion in a convenient list of twenty-four scholarly works; cf. Charles Francis Digby Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), p. 196.

[2] Cf. the repetition of the "slogan" in I Cor. 10:23.

[3] Cf. TEV, NIV, RSV, NEB, Jerusalem Bible, and others.

Most interpreters agree that Paul quotes two Corinthian slogans in verses 12 and 13: "All things are lawful for me" and "Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food." If these sayings are original with the Corinthians, the justification for sexual license may be isolated. Paul did not reject the truth of these justifications, but qualified them instead. It is possible to reconstruct the situation at hand. Paul himself had instructed the converts in Corinth that a believer is no longer under law. The requirements of the Mosaic law were set aside. Now the believer is "not . . . without the law of God but under the law of Christ."[1] This declaration of freedom from the law, however, might easily be construed as a statement commensurate with the freedom to do πάντα. For one who has been trained in Mosaic law, such a claim would be a revolutionizing experience which could lead to various sexual excesses. In I Corinthians, Paul seems determined to qualify these claims to freedom by stressing that factors and principles other than the law govern Christian behavior and keep a believer from becoming a libertine.

If the slogans are identifiable as justification for sexual license, then the pattern of thought may be reconstructed. The libertines have made two theoretical claims by which they justify their motivation for immoral conduct. The first one was simply that πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν. By such a claim, they perverted the freedom that a believer has in Christ into a freedom apart from Christ. Again, they had possibly taken their start from an utterance of Paul himself, lifted it out of context, and changed it to fit their own needs. Certainly the doctrine that a believer is not under law would be susceptible to perversion.

---

[1] I Cor. 9:21.

If, as has been suggested,[1] the claim to present rule with Christ with no future bodily resurrection was the real root problem in Corinth, then this claim to freedom could be logically grounded in the authority they now shared with Christ. If they are presently reigning with Christ, then no law could be held against them or could restrict their behavior. We may, then, identify the freedom to be directed at anyone who might object to πορνεία on the basis of Mosaic law. Against those who desired to enslave the early Corinthian church in the bonds of Jewish legalism, these libertines were asserting their Christian freedom.

The second claim of the libertines seems to have been that sexual intercourse is of the same natural order as physical hunger, as implied in the slogan, "Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food." There is an attitude toward all bodily functions that is clearly implied in these words. Food obviously satisfies the physical hunger of the stomach. No one would dare argue the necessary nature of food, especially in the light of the Christian abandonment of Jewish dietary laws. With this Christian freedom, food might be indiscriminately consumed.

---

[1] See pp. 105-106.

The claim to sexual freedom could then be justified in this way. If food is necessary to satisfy physical hunger and can be eaten without restrictions, then intercourse without limitations is acceptable to satisfy sexual appetites. The same freedoms applied to food can be applied to sex. This was a method of exonerating the practice of sexual freedom.

After all, the libertines were convinced that a new aeon had begun in Christ which commissioned a new order of reign. Christians are now reigning with Christ. Those who are believers are presently ruling with Christ. Yet the body of each believer remained essentially the same. No dramatic bodily change had occurred. Thus, they could argue that bodies have no part in the spiritual reign.[1] These physical bodies will eventually be destroyed by God; and therefore, they have no share in the kingdom of God. Since the body is destined for destruction, bodily behavior is of no significance. The former (Jewish) laws which govern the use of the body are no longer valid in the present reigning life in Christ. The logical conclusion of libertines would be that the bodies of persons involved in πορνεία should be viewed as natural, decaying organs which are being satisfied in a normal way. Believers in Christ are free to eat whatever they wish and to satisfy their sexual appetites in any way they desire.

---

[1] Cf. I Cor. 15:50.

This understanding is heightened if the Corinthians are responsible for the words in verse 13: "But God will do away with both of them." Most commentators and translations assign the phrase to Paul rather than the Corinthians,[1] but it is equally as plausible to understand these words as a part of the Corinthian slogan. If reconstructed in such a way, this conversation would be evident:

> Corinthian slogan: All things are lawful for me.
>
> Paul's response: But not all things are profitable.
>
> Corinthian slogan: All things are lawful for me.
>
> Paul's response: But I will not be mastered by anything.
>
> Corinthian slogan: Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food; but God will do away with both of them.
>
> Paul's response: Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body. Now God has not only raised the Lord but will also raise us up through His power.

This division of the text is plausible because it offers the advantage of continuing parallelism. Paul responded to the single slogans with single modifications. He responds to the double slogan with a dual qualification. This dual response parallels the quotation in stating the purpose first and then the ultimate destiny of the stomach-food and body-Lord pairs. Both clauses of ultimate destiny are introduced by ὁ δὲ θεὸς which is followed in each case by καί. . .καί constructions. In addition, a statement by Paul that God will do away with the stomach might be misleading in his argument for the importance of the body.

---

[1] E.g., Robertson and Plummer, First Corinthians, pp. 123-24; Charles J. Ellicott, A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (Andover: W. F. Draper, 1889), pp. 119-20; TEV; NIV; RSV; NEB.

If, then, this clause is identified as a part of the Corinthian slogan, the understanding of Corinthian rationalization is enhanced. Even as God will destroy the body organs, he will destroy the body itself. The body in this case has no permanent value; and thus, it should not matter what is done to or done with something temporal like the body. As C. K. Barrett notes, "It is God himself who has ordained both the process of digestion and dissolution of the body at death; how can we think it a matter of eternal significance that we should eat only this or that food?"[1] Pressing this point, the libertine could argue that bodily fornication is not a matter of eternal significance either.

Paul was quick to challenge such an assumption in reasoning. Sexual intercourse is not a bodily appetite comparable to physical hunger. He draws a sharp distinction between them as he rejects the parallelism of body-fornication in favor of body-Lord. Although he agrees that food and stomachs have only temporal significance because they are both subject to decay, he affirms that the body has permanent significance because it was meant for the Lord and has eschatological importance because it is destined for resurrection. To understand this significance, it is necessary to recognize that Paul's use of σῶμα clearly implies what is connoted by the modern term "person."[1] This is appropriately illustrated in verse 14 where ἡμεῖς is used in place of σῶμα. This interchangeability illumines the meaning of the word. As Conzelmann remarks,

---

[1] Barrett, First Corinthians, p. 147.

> The future raising of the body as providing a standard for our relationship to the body is set over against the Corinthians' enthusiastic anticipation of the resurrection and the conclusion to which this leads them, namely, their demonstration of the devaluation of the body into an earthly thing. What they are really doing here is not to attain to freedom in their dealings with each other, but to dehumanize the realm of sexuality.[2]

Paul's argument is that sexual relations involve the person in a way that eating food can never do. This is made explicit in verse 18: "Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body." A sexual relation involves two persons in the totality of their personalities for true satisfaction. To conceive of sexual indulgence on the same level as hunger is to reduce persons to the same status as food. Sex involves a σῶμα which cannot be paralleled to any impersonal substance. A person is a σῶμα in that he is not a "thing." This is why the relationship of a believer to a prostitute is a matter of great significance. It involves two persons who are more than physical "things."

---

[1] John Arthur Thomas Robinson, The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology, Studies in Biblical Theology, no. 5 (London: SCM Press, 1952), p. 9.

[2] Conzelmann, I Corinthians, p. 111.

Paul emphatically points out that sexual relations have an eschatological importance. Sexual relations and subsequent procreation link the use of the σῶμα intricately to eschatological implications of the beginning and the end. Though the pleasure-seekers justify their behavior by depreciation of the body due to death, Paul reminds them that even as God raised up the Lord, he will also raise us up through His power. Verse 14 is given a more exhaustive commentary in chapter 15, but suffice it to say that Paul understood the resurrection of the body as already anticipated in a believer's union with Christ. This ultimate destiny was the principle for him which prohibited union with a prostitute and which refuted the libertine doctrine of Paul's opponents.

In verse 15, Paul moves his defense into a new dimension to call their attention to something that they ought to know, but apparently have forgotten: οὐκ οἴδατε. Not only will bodies be raised up in the future, but bodies are also τὰ μέλα τοῦ χριστοῦ now. The church is the σῶμα χριστοῦ and so members of the church are μέλα χριστοῦ.[1] A unified cohesion exists between Christ and those who belong to Him. Both are ruled by one source of authority.

---

[1] I Cor. 12:17; cf. Rom. 12:5; Eph. 5:30.

Christ is so unified with our spirit, that our actions become in a real sense His actions. Our bodies then are instruments of His action in the world.

This argument presents the case of Paul from a different perspective. Not only is the body destined eschatologically to be raised in power, but the future hope is actualized in the present. Members of Christ belong now to Christ.

Based upon this presentation, Paul moves on to explain the consequence of sexual immorality: "Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? May it never be!" Paul points up the inconsistency with the glory of a body which belongs to Christ being made "a member of a harlot." Because of the organic coherence, the union with a harlot instead of with Christ determines the character of μέλη. The deliberateness of this act is made clear in the participle ἄρας, which has been translated more literally, "Shall I, having lifted up the members of Christ, make them members of a harlot?"[1]

Before explaining this point further in verses 16 and 17, Paul inserts the strong negative, μὴ γένοιτο, to make the answer to his own question exceedingly obvious. Then he moves on to expound on how a sinner becomes a member of a harlot. He introduces the argument again with his loaded words "do you not know." This second question does not introduce a fresh argument as in verse 15. but simply states the basis of reasoning in the previous verse. This reasoning is based upon the assertion of an obvious truth and upon an appeal to Scripture. To have sexual intercourse with a harlot is to repudiate the relationship belonging to members of the body of Christ.

---

[1] Grosheide, First Corinthians, p. 149.

The participle κολλώμενος is a strong word to express sexual union. The word had been used in the Old Testament[1] for sexual union; and at times this was set within a religious context. It is used elsewhere in the New Testament in the sense of "cling to."[2]

The use of the definite article with πόρνη is significant in that it is specifically referring to that one with whom the libertine is sinning. This is a clear example of the use of πόρνη as an indication of a literal person who engaged in sexual licentiousness. Whenever a person has sexual union with a harlot, he becomes one flesh with her; and such a union is significant because it always exists. It is not broken when the physical union is over. There must have been opponents in Corinth who were arguing that fornication with a harlot did not have lasting and significant importance. There must have been the belief that a sexual union with an unchaste woman was no union at all, religiously or ethically.

---

[1] E.g., Gen. 2:24, Deut. 10:20, Ps. 72:28.

[2] E.g., Matt. 19:5.

In order to combat such a belief, the apostle appeals to the Scriptures. In presenting Gen. 2:24, he says φησίν. The verb has no subject, though either "God" or "Scripture" can easily be inserted. The point is that in his appeal to authority, Paul simply assumes that the readers will understand the author and the significance of his quoted words. Such an assumption would more easily fit those who were familiar with the Old Testament as their Scriptures.

Paul uses these words to show that God Himself instituted the physical union between man and woman, and that such a union results in one flesh. As Lias comments on ἐις σάρκα μίαν:

> No words could more plainly shew than these and the words of the last verse, what a monstrous perversion the sin here mentioned is of the mysterious union between the sexes sanctified by God in Holy Matrimony. No word could more strongly imply than those which follow, that he who is "joined to a harlot" thereby separates himself from the Lord.[1]

In Pauline anthropology, σῶμα is basically a neutral term in that it can represent the human being either in subjection to sin or in subjection to the Spirit.[2] When the σῶμα is united with a harlot and becomes one flesh with her, the σῶμα can then be said to be cooperating with the tendencies of the flesh. The σάρξ in Paul's development is often the willing servant of sin, and ". . . is subject to sin in such a degree that wherever flesh exists, all forms of sin are likewise present, and no good thing can live in the σάρξ."[1] The σάρξ is often a negative term in Paul, indicating human nature which has been distorted or perverted by sin. The σῶμα, however, is basically neutral and can cooperate with the Spirit of God. As Barrett notes:

---

[1] Lias, First Corinthians, p. 78.

[2] Barrett, First Corinthians, p. 149.

> The body is also capable, however, not in its own strength but by the operation of the Holy Spirit, of turning in the right direction, and living theocentrically; if this happens it moves into the realm not of flesh but of spirit, not because it has ceased to be material but because as a totality it is controlled by the Spirit of God.[2]

This understanding of σῶμα is illustrated in verses 16 and 17. In verse 16, the σῶμα has been distorted by πορνεία to such an extent that σάρξ can be used of the relationship. Interestingly enough, σάρξ can be lifted from its positive passage in Gen. 2:24 and used here of this licentious relationship.

On the other hand, verse 17 shows the σῶμα in cooperation with the Spirit of God so that πνεῦμα can be used of that relationship. The Lord provides the means by which a person can utilize his σῶμα in the proper way. The same participle is used in verse 17, κολλώμενος, to describe this relationship of the body to the Lord. This terminology reveals the closeness of the union between a believer and Christ and emphatically points up the contrast. Paul is again stressing the fact that fornication perverts that which belongs to the Lord, namely the body, and makes it the possession of a harlot. The intended state of one's body is that intimate connection with Christ involves the union of one's body to the Spirit of God so that σῶμα becomes the σῶμα χριστοῦ.[1] This argument here reaches a climax in the simple imperative: φεύγετε τῆν πορνείαν. This is the conclusion that Paul has been working toward. The present imperative indicates the continual need for a believer to be fleeing from fornication.[2] The word means not merely to "avoid," but has the meaning of "run away from."[3] Temptations in Corinth were apparently so strong that a believer needed to be continually running away from them.

---

[1] William Frederick Arndt and Felix Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, trans. and adapted from the 4th rev. ed. in German by Walter Bauer (Chicago: University Press, 1969), p. 751.

[2] Barrett, First Corinthians, p. 149.

Paul's use of πορνεία does not enhance our understanding of opposition in Corinth, for πορνεία is the most general term for sexual license in the New Testament.[4] The word has been variously translated as "prostitution," "unchastity," "immorality," "fornication," etc.; but it can refer to any kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.[1] It is a broad term which is shaped by the context and application. It can refer to either secular or cultic prostitution.[2]

---

[1] Cf. I Cor. 3:17.

[2] Cf. I Thess. 4:3.

[3] Cf. Gen. 39:12, I Cor. 10:14. I Tim. 6:11. II Tim. 2:22.

[4] *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 1964-74 ed., s.v. "πόρνη, πόρνος, πορνεία, πορνεύω, ἐκπορνεύω," by Friedrich Hauck and Siegfried Schulz; Arndt and Gingrich, *Lexicon*, pp. 699-700; and William Edwy Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers* (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1966), p. 125.

In this context, R. Kempthorne seeks to show that πορνεία is clearly shaped in meaning by verses 15-17. Also he is tempted to see it as a specific reference to the incestuous relationship of I Cor. 5.[3] Whatever the case, the word itself is not decisive. It is open to broad interpretation which is governed by the context.

The remainder of verse 18 is exceedingly unclear. Paul appears to be making a distinction between fornication and all other sins by stating that all other sins are "outside the body." The question of validity in such a distinction has often been raised. C. F. D. Moule suggests that these words form a part of a dialogue, as he isolates a Corinthian slogan of libertinism and a Pauline response.[4] This option makes an attractive rendering of the verse and reduces the forced contrast between fornication and every other sin. It is equally possible to explain this teaching in light of the fact that Paul has one argument in mind, and that against fornication. Thus, his reasoning is not a product of any logical delineation of various sins, but an argument formulated for this occasion.[1] Whether there are other specific sins such as gluttony, drunkenness, and suicide that are sins against the body may not be his point here. He may be saying simply that other sins do not leave the same ". . . filthy stain on our bodies as fornication does."[2] In fornication the body is the instrument of sin; and the person is sinning against the instrument that was intended to belong not to sin, but to the Lord. Comparatively speaking, then, all other sins are outside the body.

---

[1] Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon, p. 699.

[2] Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 1964-74 ed., s.v. "πόρνη, πόρνος, πορνεία, πορνεύω, ἐκπορνεύω," by Friedrich Hauck and Siegried Schulz.

[3] R. Kempthorne, "Incest and the Body of Christ: A Study of I Cor. 6:12-20," New Testament Studies 14 (1968):571.

[4] Moule, Idiom Book, pp. 196ff.

What may be confusing to our orderly, modern minds, however, may have been quite clear to the Corinthian Christians. Paul is recalling in their minds the Judaistic understanding of sexual immorality as that which can literally destroy a person. In Jewish literature, fornication had been described as the most extreme of sins. For example, in Prov. 6:25-26, we find this warning:

> Do not desire her beauty in your heart, Nor let her catch you with her eyelids. For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for precious life.

It is possible that Paul is drawing upon the Corinthians' knowledge of such an understanding which would be unfamiliar in a strictly Gentile setting.

---

[1] Cf. Conzelmann, I Corinthians, p. 112; Barrett, First Corinthians, p. 150.

[2] John Calvin, The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, trans. John W. Fraser, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, Calvin's Commentaries (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1960), pp. 131-32.

Again the introduction ἢ οὐκ οἴδατε in verse 19 stresses the fact that Paul felt he was appealing to something the Corinthians should know. They should know that τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν ἁγίου πνεύματός ἐστιν. What was said in I Cor. 3:16 concerning the church as the body of Christ is now applied to the individual and specifically to the individual's body.[1] The image of the temple for the body of the individual believer is unique in the New Testament. It is ". . . applied only to the Church . . . except in I Cor. 6:19, where the teaching already given in I Cor. 3:16f. concerning the whole Church is directly applied to each member of it."[2] Paul uses this idea of the inhabitation of the Spirit in the individual's body as an effectual restraint from sexual immorality. His intention here is to insist upon the holiness of the congregation by stressing the holiness of each individual believer. The body itself is said to be a temple of the Holy Spirit, and nothing should be done in or to the body that would desecrate such a temple.

---

[1] In comparing these passages, Oscar Cullmann, in his The Early Church: Studies in Early Christian History and Theology, ed. A. J. B. Higgins, trans. A. J. B. Higgins and S. Goodman (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956), p. 169, says:

> "It is very important to notice that in 6. 19 the same thing is said of the individual, fleshly bodies of the faithful who make up the Church. . . . the curious application of the same word in the same epistle to two such different objects as the church and the individual human body can only be explained by the connection . . . between body and bodies."

[2] Robinson, Body, pp. 76-77, n. 1.

Paul's choice of words here is exceedingly important. The more common word for temple is ἱερόν which signifies the whole sacred enclosure with its porticos, courts, and other subordinate buildings.[1] Ἱερόν is often used as the designation for the temple at Jerusalem.[2] Paul chooses here another word which can be distinguished from ἱερόν. Ναός refers more to the temple itself--to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. In Matt. 27:51, the veil of the ναός (the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies is rent. In Luke 1:9, Zacharias enters the temple (ναός) of the Lord to burn incense. The use of ναός here indicates that this is the Holy Place in which the altar of incense stood. In a passage which is closest to the meaning of our text, Jesus is said to have been referring to the ναός τοῦ σώματος αυτοῦ.[3]

Obviously, those Christians in Corinth with Jewish heritage would more easily understand this distinction. The body is the very temple or shrine where the Spirit lives. The specific word Paul uses, assuming that the Corinthians would understand such a distinction, indicated to them that the body is the house of the temple, i.e., the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Each believer's body is the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit. Far from being worthless and insignificant, the body is a holy shrine and should not be desecrated by fornication.

---

[1] Vincent, Word Studies, p. 25.

[2] Cf. Ezek. 45:19, I Chron. 29:4, Acts 4:1, Mark 11:11, Mark 13:1.

[3] John 2:21.

There is some textual confusion over the last words of verse 19. The confusion concerns appropriate punctuation and whether the clause καί οὐκ ἐστὲ ἑαυτῶν is a part of the previous question.[1] Though much can be said for showing it as a new sentence, Barrett's conclusion is well stated:

> On the whole however it seems unlikely that Paul would have begun a sentence with a simple "and" (καί), and it is better to continue the question, which recalls to the Corinthians what they ought never to have forgotten: (a) the Holy Spirit dwells within them; (b) they are proprietors of their own bodies, or indeed of their own selves.[2]

Indeed, the believer is no longer his own because he belongs to Christ.

Verse 20 advances this understanding. The basis for the statement that the believer is not his own lies in the fact that he has been bought by God. The ransom price has been paid, and a believer has been given over to a new master. The emphasis here is on the verb ἠγοράσθητε. A person who has been bought belongs not to himself, but to the buyer. To this is added the word τιμῆς which is quite indefinite. Paul may be drawing on an analogy of a sacred manumission by using the word, as some[3] have attempted to prove; but it is more likely that he is thinking in a traditional understanding of redemption. Paul certainly derived his fundamental concept of ransoming from the Old Testament[1] so that τιμῆς would stress that such a transaction has been duly completed. Paul desires to make clear that they are not their own because they have been bought with the price of the Lord Jesus' body.[2]

---

[1] E.g., KJV and NASV translate it as a part of the previous question, while RSV, NEB, Jerusalem Bible, NIV, and TEV translate it as a new sentence.

[2] Barrett, First Corinthians, pp. 151-52.

[3] Adolf Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of

Therefore, Paul can conclude: δοξάσατε δὴ τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῷ σώματι ὑμῶν.[3] The aorist imperative δοξάστε carries the strong sense of urgency. As Leon Morris explains the inceptive use of the aorist:

> *Dē* is sometimes added to an imperative to give it a note of greater urgency. "Do it so speedily that it is already done!" The use of the aorist, rather than the present imperative accords with this. Paul does not want the command to glorify God to be taken as something that does not matter. There is an urgency about it. Let there be no delay in obeying.[4]

This positive conclusion conveys the strong negative implication: do not use the body for fornication. Paul will characteristically add ἐν τῷ σώματι[5] to express that the

---

the Graeco-Roman World, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1927), pp. 319-30.

[1] E.g., Exod. 6:6, 13:13; Ruth 4:4ff.; Ps. 103:4; Isa. 43:1.

[2] Cf. Acts 20:28, I Pet. 1:19, II Pet. 2:1, Rev. 5:9.

[3] The inclusion of "and in your spirit, which are God's" in KJV is a late textual addendum.

[4] Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale Press, 1958), p. 105.

[5] E.g., Rom. 12:1.

body is the appropriate means for glorifying God. It should be noted again that Kempthorne seeks to relate this passage to the specific case of incest in chapter 5. Thus, he can say, "By this Paul means 'keep God's temple holy . . . by removing the man defiling it.'"[1]

Implications

Our task is to discover what situation Paul had in mind when he wrote these words. From his experiences and correspondence with the Corinthians and from the oral information received, what did Paul believe was happening in Corinth? Did he envision a situation of sacred prostitution as some suggest,[2] where union with prostitutes was a religious act of worship in communion with an idol? Is this situation clearly seen in the cultic prostitution that was so dominant in Greek worship, especially in the cults of Aphrodite, the goddess of love? The position espoused here is that the situation Paul had in mind was not an idolatrous problem of sacred prostitution, but an ethical problem of secular prostitution.

Corinth has long been known as a center of immorality in the Greek world. This viewpoint has become a classic perspective of many commentators and interpreters. Sexual immorality is often thought to have been unusually rampant in this city whose goddess was Aphrodite. Appropriately, the temple of Aphrodite is often cited as a propagator of sacred prostitution since over a thousand prostitutes were employed in the temple service. This influence is thought to provide the background for such a passage as I Cor. 6:12-20. Thus, some are quick to suggest that cultic prostitution is in view.

---

[1] Kempthorne, "Incest," p. 573.

[2] E.g., Héring, First Corinthians, p. 45.

There are, however, several problems in this interpretation. For one thing, the classic understanding of Aphrodite worship is based on a misunderstanding of time. It must be remembered that Corinth was destroyed in 146 B.C. when Rome brought the Achaean League to an end. The city itself was leveled and no reconstruction was allowed.[1] After a century of desolation, Corinth was refounded by Julius Caesar as a Roman colony and settled at first by former soldiers. Within a century, the new city of Corinth had developed into a large cosmopolitan city. Thus, there is a great distinction between the old ancient city in its display of Greek culture and the new Roman city.

For example, the often repeated reference to the temple of Aphrodite is based on Strabo's statement:

> . . . the temple of Aphrodite was so rich that it owned more than a thousand temple-slaves, courtesans, whom both men and women had dedicated to the goddess. And therefore it was also on account of these women that the city was crowded with people and grew rich; for instance, the ship-captains freely squandered their money, and hence the proverb, "Not for every man is the voyage to Corinth." Moreover, it is recorded that a certain courtesan said to the woman who reproached her with the charge that she did not like to work or

---

[1] Pausanias Description of Greece 2. 1. 2.

> touch wool: "Yet, such as I am, in this short time
> I have taken down three webs."[1]

Strabo, however, is not referring to the Corinth of Paul's day, but to the ancient people in Corinth's history. As far as the restored Corinth of Paul's day is concerned, Strabo knows only of a "small temple of Aphrodite" and makes no mention of prostitutes in it.[2] Pausanias does not even mention this temple. Even in the explicit references to prostitution and the temple of Aphrodite in the ancient period, such as Athenaeus' reference,[3] there is no indication of sacred prostitution, but only of the participation of prostitution in the service of their patron. Thus, the presence of sacred prostitution in Corinth has been grossly exaggerated.[4]

In addition, the text itself makes no mention of any god or goddess related to these harlots. If this was an idolatrous problem and not an ethical matter, then Paul surely would have pointed up the religious consequences of such idolatry. From our vantage point, it seems as if Paul's arguments would have been enhanced by reference to such gods, if he had sacred prostitution in mind. Our conclusion, then, is that Paul did not have any prevalent cultic prostitution in mind. Without overtones of close communion with a deity through a material medium, the interpreter of I Cor. 6:12-20 can look legitimately for the ethical problem involved.

---

[1] Strabo Geography (trans. Horace Leonard Jones) 8. 6. 20 (the last words here may also mean "lowered three masts," i.e., "debauched three ship captains.").

[2] Ibid., 8. 6. 21.

[3] Athenaeus The Deipnosophists (trans. Charles Burton Gulick) 13. 573:

> "It is an ancient custom in Corinth . . . whenever the city prays to Aphrodite in matters of grave importance, to invite as many prostitutes as possible to join in their petitions, and these women add their supplications to the goddess and later are present at the sacrifices. When, accordingly, the Persians invaded Greece, . . . the Corinthian prostitutes entered the temple of Aphrodite and prayed for the salvation of the Greeks."

[4] Cf. Conzelmann, I Corinthians, p. 12: "The often peddled statement that Corinth was a seat of sacred prostitution (in the service of Aphrodite) is a fable."

The thrust of this passage can be understood easily within a distorted Jewish milieu. Numerous references have already been given to specific possibilities, but can the thrust of the passage as a whole be interpreted in such light?

Verse 12 presents the fundamental claim of these opponents in Corinth. They have been freed from the restrictions of the Mosaic law through faith in Christ. Now that freedom has given them the ability to do anything they please ("all things are lawful for me"), Paul can agree with such a statement and has no intention of refuting it. His approach is more indirect. He qualifies this understanding of a believer's relationship to law by stating that not all things are profitable and that some things can enslave a believer. It is important to note that the direction of the opposition is away from law, which Paul apparently understands in building his defense.

As suggested, because of an overly-realized eschatology, the Corinthians believed that the reign in Christ had already begun. Since their bodies had not changed, it was logical to assume that the body had no share in spiritual matters. Thus, as verse 13 implies, these opponents were suggesting that the body is impersonal and its appetites should be accomodated as if it were a normal urge of hunger. Paul responds clearly with the view that the body is personal; it is an integral part of man's personality. He says that "the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body." Paul's understanding of the body reveals definite ethical considerations. Without returning to the Mosaic law, which had been rejected, Paul seeks to define the purpose and ultimate destiny of the body in verses 13b and 14.

Beginning in verse 15, he begins a strong defense of his position based upon various points with which the Corinthians should agree.[1] He reminds them first that their "bodies are members of Christ." Those with a Jewish understanding of unified man in their background should readily agree to this truth, even if in more recent days they had come to believe that the body has no share in the present reign. A Gnostic whose understanding of the body as evil matter would not so readily agree to this concept.

---

[1] Cf. the repeated use of ἤ οὐκ οἴδατε which assumes a positive response.

Paul draws upon their Hebraic understanding of σῶμα in thinking of the body as an integral part of the personality. Paul is using the term in a non-Hellenistic way, and expects agreement from the Corinthian readers.

Some commentators are quick to suggest that Paul derives the σῶμα-μέλα phrase from Gnostic concepts,[1] but Ernest Best has argued convincingly that Paul's use of the terms does not reflect Gnostic origins at all. In his One Body in Christ, Best insists that we ". . . cannot trace Paul's usage of it to Gnosticism."[2] Though the origin of the phrase may be obscure, the understanding of σῶμα here is certainly Semitic.

Verse 16 carries the argument a step further, but again Paul anticipates their rapid agreement. With the Hebraic concept of body, one could easily understand how "the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her."[3] It is significant here that Paul defends this viewpoint by reference to the authority of Gen. 2:24. With an ambiguous introduction, φησίν, Paul implies here that the readers would readily acknowledge the authority and context of such a defense. For those who had been freed from the Mosaic law, Paul seems to be careful to quote from a pre-Sinai source of authority. His choice of this material from

---

[1] E.g., Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, 1:178ff.

[2] Ernest Best, One Body in Christ: A Study in the Relationship of the Church to Christ in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), p. 87.

[3] I Cor. 6:16.

Genesis may reveal his attempt for common authority with those who have rejected the validity of the Sinai law.

Verse 17 shows the alternative to union with a harlot, but Paul is careful in this parallel concept to change from σάρξ to πνεῦμα. Ρνεῦμα is more representative of the union of a believer to Christ than σάρξ or the more neutral term σῶμα. Verse 17, while introducing a new concept in developing Paul's anthropology, does not give much insight into the nature of his opponents.

The first words of verse 18 present the potent culmination of his argument against πορνεία. He continues with the enigmatic generalization about sins "outside the body" and "against the body." As suggested, this hyperbole may not be capable of logical defense from a modern point of view, but certainly provided Paul with a dynamic justification for his viewpoint. He apparently saw some clear distinction between πορνεία and every other sin. This distinction has been the stimulus for much exegetical concern.

C. F. D. Moule's suggestion that the phrase πᾶν ἁμάρτημα ὅ ἐὰν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματός ἐστιν is a quotation from the Corinthians which Paul presents by way of "dialogue" provides a reasonable explanation which avoids the apparent irrationality of verse 18. Instead of facing the perplexing position that πορνεία is essentially different from any other sin, Moule insists that this is a continuation of the dialogue that has already been recognized in verses 12-13. Moule suggests that the conversation might be understood in this way:

> 18[a] (Corinthian 'libertine' slogan): πᾶν ἁμάρτημα ὃ ἐὰν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματός ἐστιν (i.e. no sin can affect a man's true 'body': physical lust cannot touch the secure 'personality' of the initiated).
>
> 18[b] (St. Paul's retort): ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἁμαρτάνει (i.e. on the contrary: anyone who commits fornication is committing an offence against his very 'personality').[1]

The logic of this verse is so unclear that this suggestion is at least a worthy consideration. The only other logical conclusion is that Paul is so concerned to make his point that he becomes illogical.

Paul moves ahead in verses 19 and 20 to remind these opponents who have depreciated the body that the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Again the οὐκ οἴδατε construction calls for a positive response in this positive statement. Appealing to a common semantic understanding, Paul can use the term ναός to indicate the holiness of the body. It is the σῶμα which is the actual place of habitation of the Spirit.

For those whose Jewish understanding had been perverted and distorted to such an extent that the body was unimportant, this positive declaration of the σῶμα as the place of habitation would strike a sensitive nerve. Only those who had previously believed in the sanctity of the body could agree with such a fundamental statement as verse 19. The present body is the shrine of the Spirit; there is

---

[1] Moule, Idiom Book, pp. 196-97.

UMI

no place here for any understanding of a divine spark being received by a "spiritual self" divorced from the body. Drawing upon this specific term for the temple, Paul calls upon their remembrance of the fact that the body is a holy shrine. Fornication would be desecration of a holy shrine to those who would agree with verse 19. Paul's argument would be weak indeed to those who would not understand or agree with the statement that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

The last phrase of verse 19 and the whole of verse 20 explain that this shrine belongs to the one who bought it. The body of a believer has been bought by Christ. Therefore, fornication is an intolerable act since the whole purpose of this purchased body is to glorify its owner. The common understanding of ransoming among people familiar with the Old Testament provides a logical background for such a statement. This transaction has been completed because τιμή has been paid. This sacred temple now belongs to God who bought it; and thus, the owner should be glorified in the actions of the body. Such an argument would be convincing to those whose doctrine of God was that of a holy God and whose reverence for His temples has inspired all other religions. If that holy God can be said to have made the body of a believer a sacred temple, then one can rightly respond to such a temple with due reverence and respect in attitudes and actions.

Several pertinent points should be summarized from this excursion into I Cor. 6:12-20. In this general denunciation of πορνεία, there is nothing which would dictate a Gentile-Gnostic setting. If the guilty are Gnostics, there is no clear indication of such identification from the text. On the other hand, there are salient points which require that a Hellenistic-Jewish background be carefully considered. Since there is no indication that religious prostitution is in view, this study rejects the over-emphasis on cultic prostitution and views this problem as a genuinely ethical or moral issue which can be considered in its own right.

The slogans which can be assigned legimately to the Corinthians reveal an antinomian position. The basis for such a stance can be seen in the rejection of Mosaic law by those who had become "free" in Christ and in the appeal to the natural appetites of man. Paul's response is an agreement with essential freedom for believers but a rejection of any implicit claim to antinomianism. His defense obviously comes from his own beliefs and ethics, but apparently he anticipated agreement by the readers with his fundamental statements. To accomplish this, he is careful to utilize pre-fall material from Genesis to support his statements with biblical authority. His use of such authority is most significant if he was dealing with Jewish Christians who had come to reject the Sinai law.

Paul's anthropological insights can be understood as instructive tools to those who had come to believe that the σῶμα has no share in the present reign with Christ. To those who had developed an overly-realized eschatology, Paul's teaching would be exceedingly appropriate. His insistence upon the σῶμα as an intensely personal part of man would be meaningful to those who had relegated the σῶμα to a place of secondary importance in the reign. Paul can emphasize the integral part of σῶμα in the reign and stress its importance by eschatological references, by reminders that the σῶμα is a ναός, and by redemptive metaphors which recall to their minds the fact that they have been bought with a price. If, indeed, there were Hellenistic Jews who had become confused eschatologically with their new faith in Christ and who had used such confusion as a convenient rationalization for sexual excesses, then Paul's justifications could be easily understood.

Paul's hyperbole concerning sexual sins should have reminded the readers of the seriousness of πορνεία. If the Corinthians had immediate knowledge of Judaism, then they would have been reminded of the view in Judaism that sexual sins were the worst of sins. Paul's emphatic declaration is that πορνεία is a total perversion of what belongs to God. For those who were familiar with Jewish ethics and with Paul's anthropological justifications, then these words would strike a sharp note against their immorality. Obviously, this would be a motive for Paul's handling of πορνεία in this way.

I Cor. 5

Exegesis

In chapter 5 of I Corinthians, the apostle deals with the most specific case of πορνεία in the epistle. This passage has been called ". . . the clearest indication of the antinomian tendency present in the community."[1] A male in the Corinthian church has his father's wife (γυναῖκά τινα τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχειν). The ambiguity of such a statement makes the situation somewhat unclear. Several probabilities can be assumed. Since Paul does not call the situation adultery, this implies that the offender's father is dead or that the father had divorced his wife.[2] Since no judgment is pronounced upon the woman and since τοὺς . . . ἔξω ὁ θεὸς κρινεῖ,[3] the woman was probably not a Christian nor a member of the congregation. The use of the present tense ἔχειν suggests more than a casual affair. The verb points to a more lasting state of marriage or concubinage.[4] Since the woman is specified indirectly as γυναῖκά τοῦ πατρός and since Paul does not describe this as incest, it is most probable that the woman was the offender's step-mother.

---

[1] Mary Edith Andrews, *The Ethical Teaching of Paul: A Study in Origin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934), p. 73.

[2] If there is a further reference to this case in II Cor. 7:12, it would suggest that the father was still living.

[3] I Cor. 5:13.

[4] Cf. I Cor. 7:2, 29; John 4:18.

This is the prevalent assumption of scholarship today.[1]

Paul approaches this whole matter with a sense of horror.[2] He is appalled and distressed to actually hear of such a case in the Corinthian church. Paul's frustration with the congregation is apparent, so much so that chapter 5 becomes more of a judgment pronounced upon the church than upon the offender.

Paul is shocked to hear of πορνεία in the church, especially ἥτις οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν; and he angrily pronounces sentence on the offender. Paul must have in mind the clear prohibition of Lev. 18:7-8:

> You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, that is, the nakedness of your mother. She is your mother; you are not to uncover her nakedness. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness.[3]

As has been pointed out,[4] Paul is resorting to hyperbole to denounce this notorious immorality. It is obvious that Paul is not attempting to claim that no Gentile had ever committed this sin, but that in Gentile circles this practice was condemned. Paul here is apparently assuming that the readers recognize the offense as being unlawful in Jewish ethics, and he accentuates the horror of such an offense by reference to the Gentile condemnation of it. Even the Gentiles have a certain moral standard!

---

[1] Cf. Barrett, First Corinthians, p. 121; Conzelmann, I Corinthians, p. 96; James Moffatt, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), p. 55; and Robertson and Plummer, First Corinthians, p. 96.

[2] The unusual beginning word ὅλως can be taken to mean universality or actuality, i.e., "It is generally reported" or "It is actually reported." Preference here is given to the latter interpretation because of the context. This understanding is conveyed in such translations as RSV, NEB, TEV, NIV, and NASV.

[3] Cf. Lev. 20:11; Deut. 22:30.

[4] Moffatt, First Corinthians, pp. 54-55, citing other parallel statements from Cicero and others, says that ". . . we need not take 'unknown even among pagans' too literally."

Obviously, in this passage, Paul is angry and critical. He makes no attempt to be loving or persuasive; instead he resorts to dictatorial terms. His quick renunciation of such a situation, however, is clearly reminiscent of his understanding of Jewish sexual ethics.[1] Sexual immorality was understood by Jews as being a sin common among Gentiles, and here in this passage Paul reminds these whom we propose he considers to be predominantly Jewish that even the Gentiles do not allow such a practice. Although fornication among pagans at this time was not considered particularly serious,[2] this specific case of a man living with the wife of his father was outrageous even among Gentiles.[3] Paul singles out the man in this situation as if he were a member of the congregation and not the woman; but also this was a custom in that time that the man was regarded as the chief offender.[4] Paul's main condemnation here, however, falls more heavily on the congregation than on the situation, because the church had failed to respond appropriately to such a situation.

---

[1] Cf. Wisdom of Solomon 14:22-24, Rom. 1:18ff.

[2] Cf. Rom. 1.

[3] Cf. Gen. 35:22, 59:4; I Chron. 5:1; II Sam. 16:22, 20:3.

[4] Moffatt, First Corinthians, p. 55:
"Greek and Roman history as well as romance refer to this

Instead of taking responsible action against the man, the church had become arrogant. Instead of mourning over such a horrible circumstance, the church had become puffed up with self-satisfaction over their spiritual achievements. Instead of removing the offender from the fellowship, the congregation had tolerated his presence as if they saw nothing at all wrong in the offense. To Paul this lack of action on the part of the church was just as shocking as the sin itself.

Thus, Paul moves in verses 3-5 to pronounce judgment upon the man dictatorially. In his mind, Paul could correct this heinous situation in only one way: by an insistence on moral purity within the fellowship. Paul is stressing the point that there is a standard of ethical behavior beyond which represents a distortion of the Christian faith. Any situation beyond such a standard is intolerable and must be disciplined correctly. Paul's explanation of this correct discipline is unclear to the modern reader, but apparently Paul was certain of his reasoning. Though absent in body,

---

offence against public morals; there were notorious pagan parallels to Reuben and Absalom, and even some contemporary scandals at Tarsus and elsewhere in the Hellenistic world. Such marriages, or illicit sexual connexions, were not only prohibited by Roman law, however, but reprobated by public opinion, although, if the man was a slave, his offence would not be heinous in the eyes of pagan society."

Paul had already judged the offender. Paul feels confident that he understands the situation and that he is competent to reach a decision even as if he were actually present. He is entirely confident in his decision, but he will not force his judgment on the Corinthians. Before formal action is taken, they should gather together[1] "in the name of our Lord Jesus . . . . and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus."[2]

These three verses (3-5) comprise one complicated sentence that is difficult to translate, and any interpretation must acknowledge such obscurity.[3] The interpretation here takes κέκρικα in an absolute sense which requires no direct object. The infinitive of verse 5, παραδοῦναι then, is related to κέκρικα. Paul has already reached his decision as though he were present in Corinth; and this decision is that when they are assembled, they are to deliver the offender to Satan.

Verse 5 has posed a problem in interpretation. The hermeneutical principle that must govern its understanding is that of context. From other indications in the chapter,[4] it seems quite clear that Paul meant that this man was to be excluded from the church. This wicked man was to be removed from the fellowship in response to Paul's decision to maintain moral purity.

---

[1] The verb συνάγειν became a technical term for the meeting of the church. Cf. Barrett, First Corinthians, p. 124.

[2] I Cor. 6:4.

[3] In Christian Friedrich Kling, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, trans. Daniel W. Poor, 4th ed. (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1872), pp. 109-110, there is a list of various interpretations of this grammar; cf. Conzelmann, I Corinthians, p. 97.

[4] Especially verses 2, 7, and 13.

To expel the man would mean that the offender would be placed in "the world," that is, the area of the rule of Satan.[1] To abandon this man to Satan seems to imply a severe act of retribution,[2] especially in the purpose clause that follows: εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου. The noun ὄλεθρος signifies destruction or ruin and is used here in reference to the physical condition of the offender, but with a view to his spiritual benefit.[3] The word never means the annihilation of being, but the destruction of well-being as far as the purpose of what is being referred to is concerned.[4]

This deliverance to Satan is predicated upon God's ultimate determination of what Satan will be allowed to do and is aimed at the destruction of σάρξ, which, in contrast to πνεύμα, refers to the sinful nature. This abandonment of the offender by the church was intended by Paul to result in the ruin of the sinful flesh. As

---

[1] Cf. I John 5:19.

[2] Cf. I Tim. 1:20 where Paul exercised his authority over evil teachers in this same way.

[3] Cf. I Thess. 5:3, II Thess. 1:9, I Tim. 6:9.

[4] William Edwy Vine, I Corinthians (London: Oliphants, 1951), p. 74.

Grosheide comments, "This man may be lost for the church, but if his flesh is destroyed, his spirit will appear to be sanctified, at the time when Christ comes to judge, in the full sense of the word and he may enter into eternal life."[1] Paul's first concern, then, is for the salvation of the offender; but this concern is balanced by a concern for the moral purity of the church.

Until this point, there has been little indication of the real background of the problem or the church's constituency. There has only been in chapter 5 the horror expressed that this situation is the type not even existing among the Gentiles. In verses 6-8, Paul moves ahead to draw a comparison for his judgmental decision. A concern of this study is an awareness of the group that Paul had in mind as he writes these words. It shall be seen that Paul is assuming that his readers have been trained and developed in Jewish practices. We might expect that Paul is drawing upon an illustration that would be familiar to them personally or as a result of their intimate observance of local Jewish practices in Corinth at the Passover season.

Paul begins verse 6 with another reference to the pride of the Corinthians. The reference is apparently related to what was intended in verse 2. Then he moves ahead into his illustration which he introduces with οὐκ οἴδατε. These introductory words, as we observed in

---

[1] Grosheide, First Corinthians, p. 123.

I Cor. 6:12-20 have the implication of positive agreement by the readers. Paul is obviously using a well-known proverb about leaven, as he relates that μικρὰ ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ζυμοῖ.[1] Paul is not seeking to generalize and draw some unique or unwarranted conclusion from a single incident, but he reminds the Corinthians of the well-known fact that it only takes a small amount of leaven to leaven a whole lump of dough.[2] The entire Corinthian congregation is involved in this specific case which Paul brings to their attention. One immoral offender does not make the whole church immoral; but by allowing such an evil case to exist in the midst of their fellowship, the church has become involved in the guilt of the offender. Some commentators[3] are quick to suggest that Paul is not thinking in the first instance of traditionally Jewish symbols of impurity, but only of the impure effects that a little leaven can have in a whole lump of dough.

The reference in verse 7, however, is more exacting in its sphere of reference.[4] Even if there is a claim to generality in verse 6, there is a legitimate claim to a specific reference in verses 7 and 8. The injunction ἐκκαθάρατε τὴν παλαιὰν ζύμην is clearly referring to the Jewish tradition of removing all leaven and anything leavened from the house that is participating in the Jewish Passover.[1] The ceremonies which the ancient Israelites began before eating the Passover included eating unleavened bread for seven days after all leaven had been removed. This was done to commemorate the exodus from Egypt, because God gave a command before the exodus for all leaven to be removed as a symbol of the liberation from the sins of Egypt.[2]

---

[1] Cf. the use of the same proverb in Gal. 5:9.

[2] The contrast here is between μικρά and ὅλον.

[3] E.g., Conzelmann, I Corinthians, p. 98.

[4] Cf. Ibid.: "To be sure, v 7 then introduces the Jewish association of leaven and Passover; the leaven becomes the symbol of that which is unclean and indeed actively polluting."

The leaven which is to be removed from Corinth is "old," indicating that which is no longer fresh or new.[3] In the Corinthian congregation, there were still some remnants of the old life apart from Christ which worked as a corrupting influence or leaven in the life of the church. Paul insists that this old leaven be removed or cleansed out of the fellowship, if the house is to be prepared to receive the Passover. This method of argumentation is clearly Jewish in nature and would have little effect, if any, on a Gentile group.

The purpose of this catharsis is thus stated: ἵνα ἦτε νέον φύραμα, καθῶς ἐστε ἄζυμοι. The emphasis here is on the adjective νέος which means "new" not in the sense of being simply different from the old (καινός), but in the sense that this new thing did not previously exist. This stronger term is used to indicate the fact that the Corinthian converts were new creations and they were to be essentially different from the old natures to which they were accustomed.[1]

---

[1] After the Feast of Unleavened Bread, new leaven was then brought into the house.

[2] Cf. Exod. 12:6, 15:39, 13:6, 23:15, 34:18; Deut. 16:3.

[3] Grosheide, First Corinthians, p. 125.

In spite of his strong judgment upon the Corinthians and his stern rebuke, Paul is able to maintain his insistence that they are already unleavened. When Christ redeemed them from their sins, he purified or cleansed the leaven out of their lives. This is necessary in that each individual must be prepared adequately to receive the real Passover. Paul thus shifts his metaphor from the house that needs to be cleansed and prepared for the Passover to the individuals themselves. Figuratively, the people are thought to be the unleavened bread prepared for the Passover. By calling the Corinthians "unleavened," Paul appeals to the real character of the readers as Christians.

Paul moves ahead by adding "also" to point out the greatest motivation or reason for the cleansing that he demands. The same reason is the basis for the claim that they are "unleavened:" καὶ γὰρ τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη χριστός. The positioning of the words lays emphasis on "Passover," a word which can refer to the Passover sacrifice, the paschal lamb, the supper, or the feast.[1] Here it is clearly used with reference to the Passover lamb. Even as Israel ate unleavened bread for seven days to commemorate deliverance from Egypt, so Christians are enabled to eat unleavened bread perpetually (or even to be "unleavened") as a result of Christ, the true Passover lamb giving His life to deliver man from sin.

---

[1] Lenski, First and Second Corinthians, pp. 220-21.

The comparison here to the Jewish observance is close, but not exact, for normally Jews would remove all leaven before the feast could take place. As Barrett points out, "In the Christian application, God has been beforehand in providing the lamb for sacrifice . . . and it remains for men to catch up with the initiative that he has taken."[2] The sacrificial death of Christ becomes for Paul the highest and noblest reason for moral purity within the church.

Verse 8 draws the climax of Paul's argument to an appropriate conclusion through a hortative subjunctive, ἑορτάζωμεν. Here the feast embraces a broader understanding of the entire Christian experience. The image is quite attractive: "Let us therefore celebrate the feast." This injunction is clarified both negatively and positively. The "old leaven" could include all that would be characteristic of the old nature, but Paul adds the more specific allusion to "malice and wickedness." Both of these terms remind the reader of the moral offender whom the Corinthians should have expelled from the fellowship.[1] The positive side is summed up by reference to "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

---

[1] Ezra Palmer Gould, Commentary on the Epistles to the Corinthians, An American Commentary on the New Testament (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Soc., 1887), p. 46.

[2] Barrett, First Corinthians, p. 128.

The remainder of I Cor. 5 moves the whole discussion back to the offender in mind. Again Paul is moving to a place where he can insist, "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves."[2] Along the way, however, Paul attempts to clear up the misunderstanding of his "previous letter."[3] He acknowledges that it would be impossible and unreasonable for a Christian to withdraw from the real and immoral world of Corinthian life, but he insists that in the church moral purity must be maintained. He maintains that there must be strict discipline within the church, which, being practically interpreted, means remove the offender.

Implications

Paul's treatment of this specific case of sexual immorality in Corinth further enhances our understanding of Paul's concept of his readers. If Paul was convinced that Gnosticism was dominating the Corinthian congregation, we might assume that he would defend his conclusions in a way that would be comprehendible on the part of his readers.

---

[1] Lenski, First and Second Corinthians, p. 223.

[2] I Cor. 5:13.

[3] See pp. 111-18.

The flow of thought in I Cor. 5, however, points in another direction. If Paul is indeed using language and imagery familiar not only to him, but also to his audience, then a Jewish-oriented group in Corinth is to be envisioned, a group without any specific Gnostic orientation. Toward this conclusion, several salient points in I Cor. 5 are identifiable.

First of all, Paul's comparison in verse 1 of this immorality to that which exists among the pagans or Gentiles expresses his horror that such a situation could develop within a Christian church. His implication is that this type of offense would not be tolerated by Gentile pagans. While not conclusive, the understanding that these are people familiar with Jewish ethics best fits the situation here. Paul's sense of horror over such a sin is more accurately explainable if such were the case.

Secondly, the judgment pronounced by Paul as an effort to purify the church was a practical step already familiar to Jews.[1] The effects of such excommunication were to be seriously considered. This offender, who by his own actions had positioned himself outside the church, was now to be officially consigned to the realm of the world. This was designed to save the soul of the offender and to guarantee the moral purity of the fellowship.

In the background may be the account of Job 2:6-7:

> So the Lord said to Satan, "Behold he is in your power, only spare his life." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils

---

[1] Barrett, First Corinthians, p. 126.

from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.[1] Indeed, Paul assumed that this deliverance to Satan would bring about disaster and affliction which might result in repentance. Even as one of Satan's functions was to inflict pain and disease,[2] so the result of this exclusion will be physical suffering for the offender. The way that Paul couches this opinion in language that is so judgmental should remind us of the fact that Jews were already familiar with this kind of excommunication.[3] Paul apparently believed that his readers would consider his judgment as being an appropriate disciplinary action.[4] Since Paul anticipated that the church would carry out his judgment, it is not inconceivable that he believed the readers to be familiar with Jewish excommunication.

Thirdly, Paul's climatic illustration is hardly comprehendible apart from his belief that the church was a Jewish-oriented group. Only those who had been educated in Jewish customs would understand the symbolism of such an allusion as cleaning out the leaven. The analogy of leaven reminded Paul of the Jewish custom of searching the houses and throwing away all leaven just before the Passover. This reminded him that the Passover lamb is Christ and that the feast must be kept with "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." This reference led Paul on to the concept that the ". . . Christian life is like a Passover all the time."[1] To relate the symbolism of the old leaven, for example, to the immorality of the old pagan life would require the transition of two cultures if the readers were Gentile Gnostics. The illustration would certainly be more easily understood by those who were already familiar with the Jewish practices that undergird this allusion.

---

[1] Such is the suggestion of Fred Fisher, Commentary on I and II Corinthians (Waco: Word Books, 1975), p. 77, for both this passage and I Tim. 1:19-20.

[2] Cf. Frédéric L. Godet, Commentary on St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, 2 vols., trans. A. Cusin, Clark's Foreign Theological Library, new series, vol. 27 & 30 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889-90), 27:254, for a list of biblical examples.

[3] Marcus Dods, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1893), pp. 117-18.

[4] Reginald St. John Parry, The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians in the Revised Version with Introduction and Notes, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, gen. ed. Reginald St. John Parry (Cambridge: University Press, 1916), p. 53.

Finally, the whole passage is an appropriate reminder of holiness and purity in sexual ethics. As Paul sought to persuade and convince the opposition in Corinth of the need for moral purity, he reminded the readers of their prior understanding of Jewish holiness. As Goudge comments, "Holiness is of necessity a characteristic of the Church, since the Church is the body of Christ."[2]

---

[1] William Gordon Robinson, The Gospel and the Church in a Pagan World: A Study in I Corinthians (London: Independent Press, 1958), p. 86; cf. Margaret E. Thrall, The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians, The Cambridge Bible Commentary: New English Bible, ed. P. R. Ackroyd et al. (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), p. 41.

[2] Henry Leighton Goudge, The First Epistle to the

His horror over the unholy nature of such a situation and over the church's lack of appropriate response brought to the attention of Corinthian Christians the absolute necessity of holiness. This dominant theme in I Cor. 5 would not find receptive ears in a presumed Gnostic community.

Other Texts in I Corinthians

The problem of sexual immorality so evident in I Cor. 5-6 is hardly noticeable in the other chapters of the epistle. That which disturbed the fellowship and purity of the church was dealt with and then dropped in order that Paul might move on to other considerations. The letter itself is easily outlined on the basis of the various topics that Paul covers. Although fornication was a serious and early problem in the congregation, Paul deals with it mainly in the passages already covered. Other possible references are indirect and vague.

Chapter 7, for example, covers sexual relations from an apparently different perspective. The abrupt change can be credited to a change in the source of information. I Cor. 6:12-20 is the last section dealing with oral information that Paul had received. I Cor. 7 is the first section dealing with written requests. The exegetical problem continues in that we can only hear one side of the conversation. What the Corinthians wrote to Paul and the questions they asked are not discernible, but the indications

---

Corinthians, 4th ed., Westminster Commentaries, ed. Walter Lock (London: Methuen & Co., 1915), p. 39.

in chapter 7 point to asceticism rather than libertinism as the background. Perhaps Paul is quoting another Corinthian slogan with which he agrees when he says: καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ ἅπτεσθαι. This expression is a common biblical euphemism,[1] which has reference here not to fornication, but to marital relations.[2] Sexual relations are clearly involved in the next verses, but there is no extensive indication of sexual immorality. Paul deals with normal sexual relations in marriage as opposed to what he considers the better situation, celibacy. His words are colored by his declaration that ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν.[3]

The reference to fornication in verse 2 is a negative one which implies simply the existence of such behavior in Corinth. The avoidance of such immoral conduct is given as a reason for marriage. The exact audience Paul has in mind during this general introduction to the topic of marriage is not clear, but he uses the avoidance of πορνεία as a negative aim of marriage. The plural of πορνεία is used here to indicate either various types of fornication or the widespread prevalence of various cases of fornication.

This reference provides very little help toward an understanding of those who promoted sexual immorality in

---

[1] Cf. Gen. 20:6, Prov. 6:29.

[2] Cf. Craig, "I Corinthians," p. 76.

[3] I Cor. 7:29.

Corinth. It is only a general reference in passing to the apparent existence of such immorality. For Paul it serves the purpose of providing justification for his reasoning, but for the modern reader it is only another indication of the extent of disreputable behavior existing in Corinth and in the Corinthian church.

Chapter 7, then, is an excursion on marriage that is undergirded more by asceticism than by licentiousness. Even the graphic statement in verse 9, κρεῖττον γάρ ἐστιν γαμῆσαι ἤ πυροῦσθαι, does not have reference to lustful acts, but only to an attitude of the mind and heart whereby a person is consumed with passion. Thus, chapter 7 provides little, if any, help in identifying those responsible for πορνεία in the church.

Sexual immorality may lie in the background for some of Paul's admonitions in chapter 11 concerning the covering of a woman's head. This passage will be treated in chapter V, because any reference at this point is indirect. Paul's immediate context deals with the place of women in worship, and fornication may only be a part of Paul's reasons for such advice.

Conclusion

In determining the nature and identity of Paul's opposition in Corinth, scholars have given primary attention to the first four chapters of I Corinthians as they have focused on the party divisions and strife evident in the church. If the "previous letter" theory is correct, which most scholars uphold, then an earlier problem can be isolated in the church, the existence of fornication. Based upon this theory, there is sound evidence for holding that fornication was the original or earliest source of conflict between Paul and his readers. Indeed, the relationship of believers to sexually immoral people is the only topic that can be credited to this previous letter. If, as has been suggested, a fragment of this original letter has been preserved within the body of II Corinthians, then it would indicate more of a Jewish-oriented group of readers than Gentile Gnostics. The reasoning and documentation used by Paul would certainly be more appropriate for those trained in Judaism.

The broadest treatment of this subject is found in I Cor. 6:12-20, which possibly could be another fragment of any previous letter. In that passage, Paul deals with sexual immorality and Christian liberty in such a way that assumptions can likewise be made about the audience. The same is true of the specific treatment of the case in I Cor. 5. Based upon the implications from both passages, it appears that a Hellenistic-Jewish group would understand more readily the pattern of reasoning used by Paul. In addition, there is no indication that this problem springs from Gentile soil, nor that it was rationalized in specifically Gnostic ways. The texts themselves do not indicate any developed Gnostic thought.

UMI

A legitimate concern would be the possibility that what is being seen in the texts is only the background of the apostle himself. Certainly to some degree, this is true. Paul would naturally rely upon his own background and training in order to justify his claims and judgments. Much of the justification and authority which is rooted in Judaism can be applied appropriately to Paul, but the concern of this study must also assume that the readers are reflected in the texts. Apart from the texts themselves, the readers of I Corinthians are virtually unknown; their identity is a total mystery. If it may be assumed, however, that reflections of such a group are evident in the texts and that Paul would purposively use thought patterns familiar to his readers, then it is legitimate to make speculations about the most logical identification of the group. Paul seems adept at using language and reasoning with such a purpose in mind.

As far as the passages on sexual immorality in I Corinthians are concerned, there is no reason to assume that a Gentile-Gnostic group was responsible. If such were the case, Paul would have used language in a way that would have been more meaningful to them. There are many indications, however, which point to a group composed more of Hellenistic Jews and proselytes who had been won over to faith in Jesus Christ. To such a group, Paul's persuasive reasoning would have been much more comprehendible. If, as has been suggested, this was the original source of opposition in Corinth and the recipients have been accurately identified, then what implications would this conclusion have on the interpretation of the remainder of I Corinthians? This is the focus of concern in chapter V.

CHAPTER V

HELLENISTIC JUDAISM AS AN INTERPRETIVE KEY TO I CORINTHIANS

Introduction

The assumption one makes concerning the background of Paul's opposition in Corinth is determinative for his approach to the interpretation of I Corinthians. The milieu out of which arose the varied problems discussed in the epistle forms the interpreter's backdrop. The setting is perhaps more important here than in other epistles because it provides the basis for the dialogue which permeates the writing. Since only one side of the dialogue is extant, any insightful indications of the other side are exceedingly significant to a valid interpretation. An understanding of historical background is a significant and legitimate hermeneutical concern; and since the time of Baur, the identification of the opposition in Corinth has played a primary role in the flow of interpretation. Any reflections of the character and teachings of those causing the problems could be immensely valuable in the exegesis of I Corinthians.

With the rise of Gnostic concerns and documents has emerged a strong view that we are encountering a developed

UMI

Gnosticism in various New Testament epistles. While there may be legitimate documentation of such heresy in only a few passages, the trend has been to find such indications (at all costs?) in many passages. Thus, it was inevitable that the epistle of I Corinthians would be examined by those who are seeking reflections of Gnosticism. With the advent of some implicit evidence of an assumed Gnosticism in Corinth, some interpreters began to explain the thrust of the epistle against a Gnostic background.

Such an assumption may not be necessary in light of the fact that no direct evidence exists for a developed Gnosticism in Corinth during the time of the writing of I Corinthians. Furthermore, the cases of indirect evidence are often seen as little more than a zealous exercise in eisegesis. Are there any passages in I Corinthians which demand a Gentile-Gnostic audience? This study has sought to answer that question in relation to the earliest problem discernible in I Corinthians, sexual immorality. The conclusion reached in Chapter IV is that there is no passage concerning πορνεία that involves an apparent Gnostic group. In fact, the passages in question can more easily be seen in the light of a Hellenistic-Jewish group. This isolated conclusion needs to be examined in view of what we know of the Corinthian church and Paul's relationship and correspondence with the fellowship of believers there. Does the concept of a more Jewish-oriented group without the direct influence of a developed Gnosticism as seen in the πορνεία passages correlate with the other information available about the Corinthian church?

Although it has been viewed with increasing skepticism in recent years, the book of Acts provides the only available source of information regarding the founding of the Corinthian congregation. According to Acts, the Christian community originated within a Jewish environment and continued under the leadership of Jewish-Christian teachers. As was his custom, Paul began his ministry in Corinth by teaching in the Jewish synagogue. He was accommodated in the home of two Jews, Priscilla and Aquila, as he continued to find much identity within the Jewish environment. Together with Priscilla and Aquila, Paul spent his time making tents; but on the Sabbath, "He was reasoning in the synagogue . . . and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks."[1] Since it is highly unlikely that pagans were worshiping in the synagogue, here the word Ἕλληνας must refer to proselyte Jews in some degree. Paul's first converts in Corinth, therefore, were evidently pure Jews and Greek-speaking proselytes.

Later, when Silas, a Jerusalem Jew, and Timothy, a Greek Jew, arrived in Corinth from Macedonia, Paul became more forceful and dogmatic with his message to the Jews. "Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ."[2] Apparently at this point, some of the Jews began to resist Paul's work. There is no reason to believe that these were the pure Jews instead of the Greek Jews; but in response to their resistance, Paul announces, "From now on I shall go to the Gentiles."[1]

---

[1] Acts 18:4. [2] Acts 18:5.

J. M. Ford raises some interesting questions concerning this statement:

> Firstly, is this verse genuine? Secondly, did St. Paul mean that he would go to the Greek Jews or to the Gentile-pagans? Thirdly, is the statement to be taken literally, meaning that St. Paul is going to put this intention into effect immediately, or is it a "prophetic" statement looking towards the more remote future? St. Paul's words could be a merely hasty utterance not disconsonant with his impulsive character; or, seen from the point of view of St. Luke as theologian and "dramatist," the utterance might well presage St. Paul's future destiny, not his immediate work in Corinth, and be a hint of God's gradual unfolding of the plan of redemption, to the Jews, the Samaritans, proselytes, and then to the pagans.[2]

The questions she raises are difficult to answer in light of the ambiguity of both the text and the subsequent recorded actions. Following such a pronouncement, one would expect Paul to sever relations with his Jewish audience and concentrate his labors upon the Gentile world. After his declaration to the resisting Jews, "Your blood be upon your own heads,"[3] one would expect the Jews to unite in a strong offense against him. Yet the next verse states that he left the synagogue and went next door, to the house of Titius Justus,[1] a "worshiper of God" who had some undefined relationship to the synagogue. This seems to indicate that Jews and Gentiles were living in close proximity, and that there was no Jewish ghetto such as those found in other Hellenistic centers. Another possibility is that the synagogue mentioned in verse 7 is not the same one as that mentioned in verse 4. There may have been several Jewish synagogues, and Paul may have left a pure Jewish synagogue and moved to a more Greek or proselyte synagogue. At any rate, Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, was the next convert along with his family; and Paul stayed in Corinth for eighteen months without harassment from the Jews.

---

[1] Acts 18:6b.

[2] Ford, "Corinthians or Hebrews," p. 403.

[3] Acts 18:6

Based upon this evidence, there is little to support the idea that Paul intended at this moment to leave the Jewish ministry and turn completely to the Gentiles. The obvious and literal interpretation, therefore, is contradicted by the evidence given. Thus, it is legitimate to seek a plausible interpretation that corresponds to Paul's future actions. Paul's famous words, "I shall go to the Gentiles," must have been a foreshadow of his future work and not a reference to immediate action. The only other option is that he "moved" from pure Jews to Greek Jews, instead of to pagan Gentiles. In either case, the recorded evidence is that Paul continued to work within the Jewish environment at Corinth and that both pure Jews and proselyte Jews were converted to Christianity. Paul appears to have worked with Hellenistic Jews in a peaceful relationship for eighteen months.

---

[1] This is the preferred reading of the United Bible Society text.

Something arose in this relationship, however, that spoiled the peace. When Paul was brought before Gallio, the stated charge did not concern Paul's association with pagans, but pertained to the Jewish law. In the end, the Jews turned their anger on Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue. The pure Jews probably felt that Paul had encouraged the proselytes to by-pass the law in their quest for Christ. If this was the case, then the situation developing in I Corinthians becomes more comprehendible. Historical understanding of the situation reflected in I Corinthians is enhanced if it correlates with the recorded evidence concerning the founding of the Christian community. Acts seems to indicate that there was a strong Jewish influence in the earliest community. The mention of Sosthenes and Crispus[1] in the opening chapter of I Corinthians apparently indicates their continuing influence during the early years of development.

The development of the Corinthian congregation from its founding, as recorded in Acts, to the time when I Corinthians was written is of crucial importance. Two biblical references may shed light on this period. First is the declaration by Gallio found in Acts 18:14-15 that the emerging group was to continue under Jewish law. Since Jews and proselytes were the significant converts, this declaration emphasizes the continuing importance of Jewish law and the believers' relationship to it. Pagan converts would naturally have difficulty relating to the Mosaic law, but the most ambiguous relationship would be that of a Jewish proselyte's relationship to the law after his Christian conversion. As new Gentile converts were added to the congregation, confusion must have reigned. While the new converts were attempting to understand their relation to law, the Jewish-dominated leaders were re-examining their commitment to law. Those trained in Jewish circles were forced to re-think the details of their new relationship to the law.

---

[1] I Cor. 1:1, 14.

The second reference is found in I Cor. 5:9 and concerns a "previous letter" by Paul. The content of the letter is simply stated as a command "not to associate with immoral people," but the re-explanation of that command reveals much of the situation. As far as can be ascertained, the earliest problem that arose in the Corinthian church was the relationship of believers to fornicators. The situation was serious enough that Paul took time to deal with the problem in his earlier letter.

Apparently, the Corinthian Christians were associating, soon after their conversion, with sexually immoral people. The relationship of believers to the law had been relaxed to the extent that the Corinthians were associating in some significant degree with fornicators. Paul wrote in his previous letter to the church at Corinth that this association should be severed. In his explanation,[1] Paul implies that the Corinthians have taken his earlier command to mean that they should isolate themselves from all immoral people. This, Paul says, is impossible while one lives this earthly life. Paul clarifies his command by stating that his intention was that they should not associate with such immoral persons in the church. The believers are responsible for judging and maintaining a certain moral standard within the fellowship of their church. The strong indication is that Paul was referring to such association within the congregation when he wrote the previous letter. The logical conclusion, then, is that sexually immoral persons were penetrating the fellowship of the early Corinthian congregation, and that this was the earliest opposition to Paul's gospel in the church. It may be assumed also that the Corinthians had been able to rationalize such association with fornicators and that Paul's first letter failed to accomplish its intended goal, in light of I Cor. 5-6. The importance of specifying the background to this primary problem in I Corinthians, then, should add great significance to the interpretation of the remainder of the epistle.

---

[1] I Cor. 5:10-12.

Brief Survey of I Corinthians

The question may be raised legitimately if the conclusions reached in Chapter IV contribute to an understanding of the Corinthian congregation at the time Paul wrote I Corinthians. The epistle itself will be briefly surveyed in order to explain the implications that such conclusions have upon interpretation and to see if they are legitimate in light of other passages.

The focus of concern for this study has been I Corinthians. While II Corinthians is beyond the sphere of this writing's concern, it should be remembered that II Corinthians is often considered the more Jewish of the two epistles.[1] In Paul's time, the congregation was not becoming more Gnostic, for there is no evidence of such a tendency in II Corinthians; but it may have been developing even more difficulty in relating properly to Jewish heritage. The present concern is to scan the remainder of I Corinthians to discern any additional indications of background and to suggest an interpretation based upon a Jewish milieu.

Introduction (1:1-9)

Paul's salutation and opening remarks provide insight into the major emphases throughout the epistle. He is able to call his recipients "those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;"[1] but though their salvation is not in doubt, other problematical matters quickly emerge. The unity of believers and the endowment of spiritual gifts are evidently upon Paul's mind as he opens the epistle. One may doubt that Paul would have addressed Gnostics with the same calmness of attitude.

---

[1] Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (Downer's Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), p. 423.

Party Strife (1:10-4:5)

The first major section of the letter has received much attention in a search for the epistle's background. The passage deals with the Corinthian quest for wisdom and the subsequent factions which developed. Paul begins to deal in this passage with evils that were reported to him by the household of Chloe.

According to Chloe's household,[2] factions had developed in the congregation. Each faction claimed allegiance to a teacher and evidently claimed to have built a true system of knowledge based upon its particular leader. The obvious divisiveness is manifest in the opening words of this section and has become a focal point of concern to many interpreters of the epistle. It should be noted, however, that Paul does not feel that these groups have perverted the gospel. He does not imply that they have a substitute gospel, but indicates that the Corinthians have built inappropriately upon the foundation which he had laid.

---

[1] I Cor. 1:2.

[2] This is the author's interpretation of the possessive in I Cor. 1:11.

Paul spends much of chapter 1 in contrasting the wisdom which the Corinthians had developed with the wisdom of God. He reminds the readers that the wisdom of God is not the wisdom of man:

> God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things that are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that he might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God.[1]

Apparently, the Corinthians were boasting in their own wisdom, eloquence, and speech to the neglect of boasting in the Lord.[2]

In this context, Paul makes an allusion to the nature of the congregation. In verse 26, he reminds them that most of them were not wise, mighty, or noble when they were converted. The wealthy and noble are not excluded from this description, but the indication is that the majority was (originally, at least) of the lower classes. Paul chooses to illustrate his contrast by reference to this state of the Corinthians which demonstrates God's freedom in using the lowly to accomplish the great. He reminds them of their former condition according to worldly standards in comparison to their present standing in Jesus Christ. This reference, however, helps little in determining the nature of the group, especially since Paul may be resorting to hyperbole.

---

[1] I Cor. 1:27-29. [2] Cf. I Cor. 1:31.

In chapter 2 Paul explains his own ministry to the Corinthians. He makes no claim to have used lofty or eloquent words when he preached to them; he was not wise by worldly standards. Paul may be defending his preaching in this instance against the claims of those who said he lacked eloquence and wisdom. He goes on to say, however, that God chose to use the instrument of Paul's simple preaching to demonstrate His wisdom. Paul says his message may have been delivered in human wisdom, but it was enhanced by the power of God. Paul rebukes the Corinthians for their claim to wisdom and knowledge, and stresses that they are too proud to understand the deep, spiritual things of true wisdom. They are, in fact, carnal and driven by the foolish wisdom of the world. Nevertheless, in Paul's mind they are still Christians.

This is noteworthy in that Paul does not consider the Corinthians to have adopted a system of heretical doctrine. He infers that they have assimilated some inappropriate concepts which have caused dissensions and pride. This situation is dealt with in stern, yet loving, words which reflect Paul's concern for their confusion. He is disappointed that such thinking could be thought of as wisdom in light of the divisiveness and immorality which had developed as a result, but he is confident that a steady offense against such wisdom will counteract the

UMI

confusion. After all, how can they be wise when they are still babes in Christ? According to Robertson and Plummer,[1] no Gnostic or similar heresy is under fire here; rather, it is cleverness of rhetoric that is the false wisdom. Lightfoot claims that Paul is not unaware that the words he uses are borrowed from mystery religions, but denies any notion that the apostle is consciously dealing with a sect that had formed a version of the faith making use of the language of the cults.[2]

Chapter 3 includes a discourse on the relation of Paul's ministry to Apollos' ministry. Various analogies are used to indicate the continuity of the two ministries. In fact, Paul says God uses one to build on the other.[3] The sequence of ministry shows the Corinthians the harmony existing between Paul and Apollos, while pointing out the uniqueness of each. Paul is emphatic in pointing out the importance of the right foundation in building the congregation. The implication is that the Corinthians were claiming to have gained such wisdom that they had moved on past the teaching of Paul. They were claiming a further revelation that would take them to a position far from that which Paul had laid. The Corinthians may have used the analogy of agriculture to justify their position. They may have considered Paul as the planter and understood Apollos as watering the plants; but now they have grown to full harvest and appear as differently from Paul's beginning as a plant does from a seed.

---

[1] Robertson and Plummer, First Corinthians, p. 32.

[2] Lightfoot, Notes, pp. 173-74.

[3] I Cor. 3:6: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth."

Whatever the case, Paul moves on to a more powerful analogy: that of a builder. This reference reminds the Corinthians of their role as builders and provides Paul with the context for saying, "Let each man be careful how he builds upon it" (the foundation which Paul had laid).[1] He suggests that the Corinthians are deceiving themselves in thinking that they are wise, and he warns them that what they are building may be burned up when the true test comes.

Several salient points should be made concerning this section of I Corinthians. While Paul is irritated that factions could develop in this congregation, he in no way indicates that he is combatting false doctrine in a developing heresy. Though the immorality of Corinth is far worse than that of Galatia, I Corinthians does not contain the same spirit of bitterness and forcefulness as does Galatians. The Corinthians are deceived into thinking that they are wise and have gotten themselves involved in a popularity contest over former leaders and models, but there is no direct evidence that this was precipitated by Gnostics infiltrating the church. If Paul had felt that such was the case, we can assume that he would have handled the situation in a more direct way. Instead, he does not condemn the Corinthians for their efforts, but rejects the way they have gone about achieving their ends. He does not condemn their efforts to build, but he rejects any effort of careless building which does not build upon the foundation. Paul is not denouncing another gospel in these chapters, but is complaining about the poor building upon the foundational gospel he laid down. The Corinthians have claimed wisdom, but Paul suggests that they are not so wise.

---

[1] I Cor. 3:10.

The use of γνῶσις and σοφία in these chapters may suggest that Paul understands himself to be dealing with Gnostic heresy. The terms, however, can be more easily understood simply as cultural terms used by the Corinthians to describe their understanding of this new faith. As pointed out previously, some terms took on new understandings later in time, and became key words or technical terms in developed Gnosticism; but Paul's use here does not indicate that he is combatting a specific doctrinal heresy. He is correcting their particular views of his ministry and the new faith in which they have believed. Throughout these chapters, Paul's midrashic technique, along with his frequent use of the Old Testament, convinces this author that Paul was corresponding with a congregation more Jewish than Gentile in nature and that he was unaware of any Gnostic heresy in the church.

Overly-realized Eschatology (4:6-21)

While there is no indication in chapters 1-3 as to how the Corinthians could develop such wisdom, there is evidence in chapter 4 (and chapter 15) that eschatological misunderstandings were causing the problems. The heart of the problem can be seen in overly-realized eschatology. Basically stated, the Corinthians claimed that they were already ruling. They must have interpreted the kingdom as having begun already, and now they were sharing in its power. There was apparent confusion over the time of the kingdom, for the emphasis in verse 8 is on ἤδη.

Paul's confrontation with this error does not deny the Corinthians' claim to knowledge, but admonishes them for their behavior which contradicts their own thinking. He wishes that they were already ruling, but he is diligent to remind them that "to this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless."[1] Paul points out that the Christians are not ruling yet; but if the Corinthians believed that such were the case, then their confusion over the body's participation in the kingdom is more readily understood.

Pagan Law Courts (6:1-11)

Paul's instruction about settlement of disputes is incomprehensible unless he is directing himself to a Jewish-

---

[1] I Cor. 4:11.

UMI

oriented audience. Controversies have arisen within the fellowship of the church, and there is a need for legal jurisdiction. The believers have begun to ignore the Jewish courts by taking their disputes to Roman courts. Paul's admonition is to handle the disputes themselves within their own courts. He reminds them that the disputes are a sign of defeat and failure. The cause of Christ is hindered when believers take such disputes to heathen courts. Those trained in Jewish legal procedures would easily understand this matter of judging and of taking one another to law courts. The judgment of the world[1] is a familiar theme in Jewish apocalyptic writings,[2] and would hardly be comprehensible to Gentiles. The οὐκ οἴδατε constructions indicate that Paul expected the readers to agree about their role in judgment. If the Corinthians considered themselves as already reigning, then this would add to the force of his argument and to his sarcasm about the need for "one wise man."[3] This whole paragraph reminds the modern reader of the account in Acts where Gallio declares the Christians to be a Jewish sect under the jurisdiction of Jewish courts. In other words, these believers had a legal right to carry out Paul's instruction because they were considered to be Jews. The command to take such disputes to their own courts as opposed to pagan courts is a proper concern for those in a Hellenistic-Jewish setting.

---

[1] I Cor. 6:2.

[2] E.g., The Wisdom of Solomon 3:7-8 NEB says, "In the moment of God's coming to them they will kindle into flame, like sparks that sweep through stubble; they will be judges and rulers over the nations of the world, and the Lord shall be their king for ever and ever." Here the righteous judge and rule the nations, while God is their king.

[3] I Cor. 6:5.

Matters Related to Marriage (7:1-40)

I Cor. 7 begins a section in which Paul responds to specific questions posed by the Corinthians. It has long been recognized that Paul is dealing with a group which has espoused ascetic principles. For this reason, dualism becomes apparent, though taken to a different extreme from that in chapter 6. This does not force a Gnostic view on the chapter, however, because there are several indications that a Jewish audience may be in Paul's mind.

For one thing, Paul's language in this chapter is filled with Jewish terminology. This fact proves no more than that Paul himself used Jewish thought patterns and terms, but there are indications that such terminology has been used previously by the congregation. Incidentally, Paul's attitude here toward marriage is presumably negative. Thus, Moffatt can say that Paul ". . . appears, indeed, to have felt a certain dislike for the sex-relation."[1] Discerning Paul's basic stance in this passage along with such passages as Eph. 5 has been a moot point receiving much attention in Pauline studies. For present purposes, this can be understood as Paul dealing with Jewish-Christians who are confused over the proper relationships to their bodies, to the kingdom, and to their heritage in Jewish law. In such case, there would be those who would repress the body and its marital and sexual functions. Since Paul was unmarried, they might expect him to support their position by discouraging all marital relations.

---

[1] Moffatt, First Corinthians, p. 74.

There are other indications of the possibility of a Jewish background. The indication in verse 14 is that the Corinthians were concerned about holiness and the ceremonial cleanliness of children from mixed marriages. This would be of little concern to Gentiles. The purpose in this discussion is not to deny all outside influences, but to suggest that this chapter can easily be understood within a Jewish setting, and that a Gentile-Gnostic interpretation is not required.

Judaism has long been noted for its emphasis on marriage and sexual relations. The Old Testament provided a sound basis for a healthy view of such, and much of what was taught related to the place of marriage and sex in a Jew's life. What is commonly overlooked is that in Judaism there was also a trend toward asceticism. Such a reminder has been the helpful contribution of J. M. Ford.[1] Such abstinence was allowed in such cases as holy war, Naziriteship, and priesthood. For instance, in I Sam. 21:4-6, David explains to the priest that his men are consecrated because they have kept themselves from women. David explains, "Surely women have been kept from us as previously when I set out and the vessels of the young men were holy."[1] The indication is that abstinence was a customary practice of discipline in such cases and was related to the possession of holiness.[2] The vow of a Nazirite included strong indications of asceticism. As Max Weber explains, "Originally they were ascetically trained warrior ecstatics who--in the single certain tradition--left their hair unshorn and abstained from alcohol and originally, also, from sexual intercourse."[3] Samson was an exceptional one who did not take the sexual restraint seriously.

---

[1] Josephine Massingberd Ford, A Trilogy on Wisdom and Celibacy, The Cardinal O'Hara Series: Studies and Research in Christian Theology at Notre Dame, vol. 4 (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), p. 26.

In later Judaism, abstinence is found more developed in the Qumran community. In Qumran, asceticism is not attributed to a dualism with regard to the body. As Matthew Black explains:

> The main and essential characteristics of the sect . . . are to be explained in terms of the priestly ascetic ideal which formed the original basis and inspiration of hasidic legalism. Whether full members of the order were life-long Nazirites, as has been claimed, or not, the classic accounts of individual

---

[1] I Sam. 21:5.

[2] Cf. Ford, Trilogy, p. 26.

[3] Max Weber, Ancient Judaism, trans. and ed. Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1952), pp. 94-95.

> Essenes and of their communal life point to such a hierocratic ideal, embodied in a system designed to ensure the observance of the highest grade of Levitical purity, only to be found elsewhere among the Temple priesthood.[1]

The exact nature of celibacy in the Essene community is a matter of question,[2] but its existence furthers the case of sexual abstinence within Jewish circles.

Chapter 7 reveals some Corinthians had chosen this path. Others had dissolved their marriages completely, while still others were confused as to which path to take. If, indeed, overly-realized eschatology was the critical problem in Corinth, then it becomes understandable why the people would be confused over the relation of the body to the kingdom of God. As previously shown,[1] some Corinthians concluded that the body had no validity and thus licentiousness became a way of life. It is apparent that others felt that their present reigning status in the kingdom demanded a higher form of purity and holiness. For them, asceticism became a way of life. To this group, Paul responds in chapter 7.

---

[1] Matthew Black, The Scrolls and Christian Origins: Studies in the Jewish Background of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p. 44.

[2] Philo, for example, speaks of Essenes who were celibate. See Philo *Hypothetica* (trans. F. H. Colson) 11. 14:

> "Furthermore they eschew marriage because they clearly discern it to be the sole or the principal danger to the maintenance of the communal life, as well as because they particularly practise continence. For no Essene takes a wife, because a wife is a selfish creature, excessively jealous and adept at beguiling the morals of her husband and seducing him by her continued impostures."

Josephus, on the other hand, speaks of marrying Essenes. See Josephus *The Jewish War* (trans. H. St. J. Thackeray) 2.160-61. Josephus makes it clear that these marriages were for procreation only. Thus,

> ". . . they think that those who decline to marry cut off the chief function of life, the propagation of the race, and, what is more, that, were all to adopt the same view, the whole race would very quickly die out. They give their wives, however, a three years' probation, and only marry them after they have by three periods of purification given proof of fecundity."

Meat Sacrificed to Idols (8:1-11:1)

This section deals with Christian freedom in relationship to meat which had been sacrificed to idols.[2] The passage is not a treatise on a believer's relationship to idols, but it is clearly addressed to people who "know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one."[3] This monotheistic basis is not argued, but assumed, as Paul develops his case. In fact, the group addressed is distinguished by its monotheism from those (Gentiles?) who are "accustomed to the idol until now."[4] Paul argues from the standpoint that those within the congregation have no problem with idols (not even a lingering problem). The whole problem as introduced in chapter 8 is that which would cause severe complications only for those not accustomed to idols. Jewish training with its monotheistic thrust would provide the most logical background for the knowledgeable group. Those with the monotheistic background are told that they could damage the conscience of a weaker brother, presumably one with more intimate connections to idols.

---

[1] E.g., see pp. 106ff.

[2] The term εἰδωλόθυτον is a Jewish term and is contrasted to the Greek term ἱερόθυτον which is used in I Cor. 10:28. This adds to the contrast in audience. Cf. Acts 15:29, 21:25; Rev. 2:14, 20; Conzelmann, I Corinthians, p. 139, suggests that the term is used here ". . . with a polemical edge against the Greek ἱερόθυτον."

[3] I Cor. 8:4. [4] I Cor. 8:7.

Although eating sacrificial meat was a customary practice on social occasions,[1] Paul points out the ethical decision of becoming a stumbling-block to a weaker brother. Paul does not clarify the intrinsic worth or value of the meat, but qualifies the knowledgeable brother's freedom to eat such meat.

The reference to the group with knowledge deserves mention here, for some might mistake this as an obvious Gnostic reference. The knowledge referred to can simply be understood as enlightenment on the nature of the other gods. There is no hint here of any developed Gnostic concept of a relationship between a knower and the thing known in the process of knowing itself. As Conzelmann suggests, "In this respect Paul is ahead of them, and is to that extent 'more Gnostic' than they."[2]

Paul uses the phrase "we all have knowledge" in a decidedly sarcastic way. He may be quoting another

---

[1] Cf. Charles Kingsley Barrett, "Things Sacrificed to Idols," New Testament Studies 11 (1965):144.

[2] Conzelmann, I Corinthians, p. 140.

Corinthian slogan, but his development suggests strong criticism against those who use knowledge to justify their unconcern about others who lack such knowledge. Again, the stronger group is addressed and appealed to in monotheistic tones, which suggests those with no connection to idols.

The ninth chapter is Paul's personal illustration about Christian freedom and offers little insight into the character of the congregation. Chapter 10, however, offers some forceful insights. The first section represents an excursion which appeals to Jewish conscience. Then Paul returns to summarize the discussion of idol meats.

In the opening excursion, Paul makes certain assumptions about his readers. The first and most obvious one is that they are familiar with the Old Testament. The admonitions are given with reference to stories from Old Testament life, and are assumed to be readily understood. For example, καθώς τινες αὐτῶν is used in verses 7, 8, and 9 to bring to mind memories of such incidents as those contained in Exod. 32, Num. 21, and Num. 25.

A second assumption is that the readers and Paul himself have the same fathers. Paul obviously speaks as a Jew, but he claims without hesitation that the readers have as their fathers those who were involved in the exodus. If, as many assume, the readers in Corinth whom Paul was attempting to convince were Gentiles, then his statement is most surprising.[1] One might argue that he does not mean to include the readers, although this view nullifies the force of his argument; or one might take all Christians as being the new Israel, which symbolically would give Gentiles a Jewish heritage. The latter is more plausible, but fails to account for the specific implications of Paul's Jewish argument. A simple hermeneutical principle can easily be overlooked at this point. The first attempted interpretation should be the obvious one. If there was a strong cohesion of Jews and Jewish proselytes who had been converted to Christianity, then Paul's inclusion of the readers in this midrash is easily understood.

---

[1] Barrett, First Corinthians, p. 220: "It is surprising

Another assumption involved in this section is familiarity with Hellenistic-Jewish teaching. For example, the interpretation of Christ as the spiritual rock that accompanied the Israelites is a clear reflection of Hellenistic-Jewish thought prevalent in Paul's day. Compare Philo's allegorical interpretation of the law:

> To return to what I was saying, the soul falls in with a scorpion, which is "scattering," in the wilderness, and drought of the passions seizes upon it, until God send {sic} forth the stream from His strong wisdom and quench {sic} with unfailing health the thirst of the soul that had turned from Him. For the flinty rock is the wisdom of God, which He marked off highest and chiefest from His powers, and from which He satisfies the thirsty souls that love God.[1]

---

that he should refer to 'our fathers,' since the majority of the Corinthian Christians seem to have been Gentiles."

[1] Philo Allegorical Interpretation (trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker) 2. 86.

Paul's interpretation of Christ as the rock is not explained and leads one to assume that the readers understood the reference. The text here is plainly dependent upon Jewish traditions about the exodus. As Conzelmann explains,

> Underlying this passage is the miracle of water from the rock described in Ex. 17 and Nu. 20 and presented with many variations in the OT. . . . Acc. to Ex. 17:6 the site of this miracle is the rock of Horeb. . . . Already in OT exposition this miraculous rock, like the wilderness wandering, is given typical significance. It is viewed as a paradisial {sic} gift of salvation with a plain eschatological ref. In later Jewish speculation a combination of Ex. 17 and Nu. 20 give birth to the legend of a rocky fountain which followed the people in the time of Moses and supplied them with water.[1]

Paul's presentation is most easily understood as being addressed to a group that was strongly Jewish-oriented. Apparently, Paul felt that this section could draw together the people of Corinth by reminders of their heritage.[2]

The conclusion of this subject is a summary of Paul's presentation. A contrast is made between the readers and those Gentiles who sacrifice to demons (verse 20) and between the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Instead of treating this matter in a legalistic manner, Paul uses subjective arguments that are based upon his previous discussion. Thus, the end result is that these readers are not to act without evaluating the consequences of influence on others.

---

[1] Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 1964-74 ed., s.v. "πέτρα," by Hans Conzelmann.

[2] Note the emphasis on "all."

Matters of Worship (11:2-14:40)

Paul then proceeds to discuss several topics that relate to the worship experience in Corinth. The people had apparently allowed their party strife and use of tongues to affect their Christian worship. In Paul's criticism of this, the modern reader does not glean much direct information about the congregation. Paul's purposes in this section are to re-establish marital authority in worship, to re-emphasize the importance of proper and considerate observance of communion, to remind the Corinthians of the oneness of those who belong to the body of Christ, to stress the importance of love as the highest mark of a spirit-controlled Christian, and to insist upon the orderly exercise of spiritual gifts in worship.

The first section deals with the place of women in worship. Paul develops the concept of the husband's authority over his wife as demonstrated in the hair style and hair covering of the wife when she attends worship. This concept is developed along Hellenistic-Jewish lines[1] which are used to form the basis for his specific inference. The man can be said to be the head of the woman in the sense that she owes her origin to him. She was created from man, and her existence is explained by him. Again, the argumentation is based on the creation story, or a time prior to the Mosaic law. In fact, most of the application is based on the Genesis account of creation, an account much different from the Gnostic view of cosmogony. This strong reliance on Genesis for the order of and purpose in woman's creation reveals Paul's bias, but this one who became "all things to all men" must have felt that his readers would understand. At any rate, he closes his appeal by reference to the customs already established in the congregation. The woman must cover her head. To Paul, it is a matter of custom and creation.

---

[1] Cf. Conzelmann, I Corinthians, pp. 182ff.

The second section in this chapter deals with the Lord's Supper observance. Several problems had arisen in the observance because there were certain divisions in the fellowship. Although this is reminiscent of the factions in chapter 1, the only real connection between the reference here and the one in chapter 1 is that they both exhibit the divisive nature of the congregation. In chapter 1, the situation was apparently a problem of groups quarreling over certain points. In chapter 11, the situation implied[1] is that social distinctions were being made in the fellowship which prohibited the congregation from observing the Lord's Supper, and consequently worshiping as a unity. Paul is responding here specifically to the abuses in the Lord's Supper which had been reported to him. Evidently these divisions were distinctions made between rich and poor, though, as Barrett points out, ". . . it is not impossible that a meal may also have provided Jewish

---

[1] Cf. v. 21.

Christians, if they insisted on *kosher* food, with an occasion for separating themselves from their Gentile brothers."[1] Paul's criticism is based on the fact that they are not observing the *Lord's* Supper.[2] Thus, he proceeds to deliver to them a tradition about the Lord's Supper and to make specific application for its observance at Corinth.

Chapter 12 begins the extensive discussion of spiritual gifts. Paul desires to clarify and to position the gift of tongues which had become abused into an orderly understanding of the body of Christ with its expressions of varying gifts. This chapter provides the theological and practical basis for the specific applications in chapter 14. Before explaining the unity of the body of Christ, Paul makes an allusion to the identity of the readers. He states in verse 2: οἴδατε ὅτι ὅτε ἔθην ἦτε. This statement is striking in that it appears to decide the case. The group Paul has in mind at this point were apparently Gentile pagans who had been converted to the claims of Christianity. It is safe to assume that this is the group causing the excess in spiritual gifts. So Paul reminds them that they were once Gentile pagans led away to dumb idols.

---

[1] Barrett, *First Corinthians*, p. 261

[2] The phrase in v. 20 is κυριακὸν δεῖπον, and there is no exact English equivalent for the adjective. The emphasis here is that it is the *Lord's*, and not their own.

Paul also clearly states, however, that they are no longer Gentiles. The whole argument assumes that these readers who are disturbing the fellowship are no longer in the state in which they once found themselves. Though Gentile pagans by birth, these believers may have been proselytes to some degree to Judaism. Paul is saying only that these believers were at one time Gentile pagans, a statement which would correlate to the testimony of any such proselyte. There is no indication of any direct trace of Gentile Gnosticism current in this group. The main point is that these believers should understand from their past experience that a person can be led astray in moments of ecstasy. Whether these readers had been trained in Judasim is not covered in this allusion.

Whatever the case, it is necessary to consider briefly how Paul develops his case. In dealing with the phenomenon of inspired, ecstatic speech, Paul seeks to present principles by which such speech should be judged. He begins by stating the basic truth that the true Christian password is "Jesus is Lord." Paul is not concerned with the manner or attitude of what is said, only the content. He lays down this basic proposition in verse 3 and then moves ahead in a more general way.

He explains that there is great diversity of gifts in the body of Christ. Believers are bound together in unshakable unity within the body, but there is unlimited diversity in the endowment of spiritual gifts. This is analogous, Paul says, to the body itself. He is quick to indicate that such unity can bind together both Jews and Greeks.[1] He criticizes those who would claim spirituality over the others. Perhaps the Gentile converts who had been won to faith in Christ at various stages of proselytism were carrying over into their new religion some remnants of their Hellenistic culture and religion. This type of gift in ecstatic language would be enough to give these converts a sense of superiority over their Jewish-Christian friends. Paul denounces such divisiveness and insists upon unity in spite of diversity.

Chapter 13 expounds Paul's view of love as the greatest gift in a Christian's life. This excursion offers no insight into the nature of the Corinthian church. Chapter 14 picks up the foundation laid in the previous two chapters and applies such teaching to the use of the gift of tongues in worship. This chapter begins with a comparison of tongues and prophecy. Such gifts are judged in relationship to the concern for edification of the church. Then based upon this understanding, Paul lays down some specific guidelines for the use of glossolalia in the church worship experience. Again, little is learned concerning the background involved in Paul's criticisms and admonitions concerning worship.

---

[1] I Cor. 12:13.

The Resurrection of the Body (15:1-58)

Such is not the case in chapter 15. This chapter is often considered unrelated to the position it holds within the epistle, or at least unconnected to the other topics. If, however, as previously suggested,[1] the Corinthians were misled in understanding their relationship to the new aeon--if they overly-realized the eschaton to the extent that such implied questions were raised,[2] then this chapter has a valid position of prominence.

Paul opened this epistle with a general discourse directed to the whole congregation. He exposed their divisiveness and their eschatological misunderstanding which essentially caused their troubles. Then he addressed specific issues that had arisen in the congregation which could easily arise within a basically Jewish-oriented group of pure Jews and Jewish proselytes at varying degrees of persuasion. After this, Paul returned to the root problem in order to clarify in conclusion the main reason that such ethical problems could arise. The indication is that the Corinthians felt that the body was unimportant. Since the eschaton had begun, whatever was to happen to the body must have already happened. Since believers already reign with Christ, then the body must have no real significance in the kingdom. Therefore, it does not matter what a believer does with his body.

---

[1] See pp. 105ff.

[2] Cf. II Tim. 2:17-18 where according to Hymenaeus and Philetus, the resurrection had already taken place.

Paul confronts such thinking in chapter 15 with a strong defense of the resurrection of the body. At stake is both the nature of the resurrection and the time of the resurrection. This closing argument is addressed to the whole congregation and becomes the climatic defense of Paul to the Corinthians.

Paul begins this self-contained treatise without a transition. He introduces the defense with a traditional confession of faith with which the Corinthians could agree. Upon this common basis of fact, namely the death, burial, resurrection, and appearances of Christ, Paul moves into the subject at hand. Paul is not the originator of the tradition, only a transmitter; but he uses the simple tradition to reformulate the basis on which his extensive argument could be based. To these people who believed that the eschatological conditions had been fulfilled, Paul proceeds with a strong defense.

In verse 12 Paul refers to some who "say there is no resurrection of the dead." This reference is clearly an example of a doctrinally unsound assertion, held not by all but by some (τινες).[1] There was a group at Corinth that denied the resurrection of the dead. As far as can be ascertained, the resurrection of Jesus had not been denied, only the resurrection of others. Furthermore, it may be that these same people denied the resurrection of the body without denying that souls continue to exist after the death of the body. If overly-realized eschatology was a problem, as chapter 4 suggests, then one may find an explanation for the thoroughly inconsistent acceptance of the resurrection of Christ when there is a rejection of the resurrection of believers. If Christ's resurrection instituted a new age when believers inherit all the blessings of the eschaton, then such an inconsistency might be possible. The apostle, however, bases his defense on the coherence of the two concepts.

---

[1] Cf. I Cor. 4:18, 8:7, 15:34.

The nature of the resurrection is indicated in an emphatic way. Paul stresses that it is the body that is resurrected. While the new body differs from the old body in vital ways,[1] there is continuity between the two. Something of the essential nature of the old body is continued in the new body, only it is clothed in an imperishable form. This understanding reinforces what Paul has said elsewhere in the epistle, namely that the body is significant in the kingdom of God.

The other emphatic point Paul makes in chapter 15 is the time of the resurrection of believers.[2] He states unequivocally that believers are raised after Christ is raised. The resurrection of Christians is an event in time that is isolated from the historic raising of Christ.

---

[1] Cf. vv. 35-50. [2] Cf. vv. 20-28.

First, Christ was raised, as the first-fruits of those who are asleep. Then, believers are raised at a later time.[1] There is no place in this timing for overly-realized eschatology. Paul is clear on that point. He even explains why this is necessary, because Christ "must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet."[2] Then the explanation follows: "The last enemy that will be abolished is death."[3] Thus, Paul covers the nature and time of the resurrection in this chapter and bases all of it on the primacy of the resurrection of Christ. While there are those who argue that Paul here misunderstood the Gnostic teaching, it is easier to understand that Paul dealt correctly with the situation at hand.[4]

Conclusion (16:1-24)

These words of conclusion offer little insight into the nature of the Corinthian congregation, but it should be pointed out that the collection for the mother church at Jerusalem may reveal ethnic as well as economic ties. Also, the collection may well represent a Christian version of temple tax to which Jews already would be accustomed. At any rate, Paul's appeal for support of Jerusalem would be received obviously by a Jewish-oriented congregation with more sympathy than that which might characterize a Gentile-Gnostic group with little concern for Jerusalem.

---

[1] Non-believers are not considered in this passage.

[2] I Cor. 15:25. [3] I Cor. 15:26.

[4] Cf. Wilson, Gnosis and the New Testament, p. 51.

Concluding Remarks

All New Testament epistles relate to the reader only one side of a relationship. In some epistles,[1] an understanding of the unknown side of this relationship is not as important as in others;[2] but there is no epistle in the New Testament in which an understanding of the audience is so important as in I Corinthians.[3] Since this epistle deals with specific moral and practical problems, any interpreter must have an over-riding concern that he be familiar with the background involved. The purpose of this study has been to re-think the question of background on the basis of the initial problem developing in the congregation, namely sexual libertinism.

A major tendency in modern scholarship has been to give assent to the conclusion that Gnosticism was the background involved and that Paul was confronting such a heresy. Assuming that the problematic group in Corinth was comprised of full-fledged Gnostics, many interpreters proceed to explain the teachings of the epistle. While there is no indication of a developed Gnosticism during this early period, the evidence is that Paul used what later became Gnostic terminology. Since Paul's epistle is our basic source for understanding the Corinthian church during this time, one must decide whether Paul viewed himself as combatting a developed Gnosticism. If Paul did so interpret the situation, why are Gnostic terms used in such a variety of contexts? For example, instead of condemning γνῶσις, Paul can agree that "We all have knowledge,"[1] and thus, includes himself. Again, if Paul is using Gnostic terms, he is careless in his usage.[2] The context in which the "technical" terms πνευματικός and ψυχικός are used is one in which γνῶσις is conspicuously absent. As Birger A. Pearson explains,

---

[1] E.g., Romans. [2] E.g., Galatians.

[3] E.g., when an interpreter approaches the enigmatic statements in I Cor. 7:14, he must explain the unusual use of ἁγιάζω with some sphere of reference in mind. The verse becomes coherent with Paul's teachings elsewhere when one understands that in the background is a Jewish concern raised by the Corinthians in their letter to Paul. The passage must be interpreted in light of the Jewish concern over holiness and defilement. Thus, most commentators would agree that I Corinthians is culturally conditioned, and it is necessary to envision the culture if one is to interpret the abiding principles. The audience in this epistle is exceedingly important.

> This can be no accident, for Paul would scarcely have omitted a reference to γνῶσις in this context if it had been technically used as a part of the opponents' claim to be πνευματικοί.[3]

Furthermore, if Paul is using Gnostic terminology, he reveals little knowledge of the Gnostic myth or of Gnostic soteriology.[1] For these reasons and others given previously, it can hardly be concluded that Paul felt his opposition to be rooted in Gnosticism or even that he understood Gnosticism.

---

[1] I Cor. 8:1.

[2] See Charles Kingsley Barrett, "Christianity at Corinth," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 46 (1964): 276, for an excellent survey of the inconsistent usage of σοφία and γνῶσις in the Corinthian epistles.

[3] Pearson, Terminology, p. 42.

While not denying the influence of other tendencies, one must conclude that the basic orientation of the Corinthian church in this problematic period was Hellenistic Judaism. Following the founding of the congregation, the group obviously fell into certain doctrines and practices that were to cause great opposition to Paul's gospel. I Cor. 4 and 15 make reference to the doctrine that could cause such trouble. The first known area in which the distorted doctrine became manifest was in the area of sexual immorality. The struggle concerned the relationship of the body in a new aeon. If believers are now reigning, then what relationship does a believer have with the old Mosaic law, particularly the obsolete principles pertaining to restrictions on the use of the body? This thinking can be understood easily if one envisions a group of Jews in various degrees of persuasion who are trying to understand their new faith in light of their old faith.

This view allows an interpreter to take more seriously the record of Acts with its strong indication of Jews and proselytes comprising a significant majority of the congregation. There are justifiable explanations for the development of sexual immorality in such a context where overly-realized eschatology was a common misunderstanding. This clue to the identity of Paul's opponents in Corinth relates easily to the remainder of the epistle and provides an easy solution for the integration of various "unrelated" passages. As far as sexual license is concerned, the indicators in I Corinthians point to the conclusion that Paul believed this problem to have originated within the same type of congregation dominated by Jews and Jewish proselytes that one encounters in Acts 18. As far as can be ascertained, Paul had no idea that any developed heresy had penetrated the church this early in time; and, therefore, his counsel is not a condemnation of heresy in the opponents, but a combatting of errors and misunderstandings that have led to wrong behavior. In fact, Paul focuses on the behavior itself more than on the misunderstandings. His frequent use of the Old Testament[1] and his midrashic technique indicate that he was appealing to their Jewish consciences and expecting subsequent approval. Since a Gnostic audience is not dictated, and since there are indicators that Hellenistic Judaism is an appropriate milieu, this is the understanding proposed as a key for the interpretation of I Corinthians. As shown, this understanding best fits the original problem in Corinth, particularly as revealed in I Cor. 5-6. By inductive reasoning, this conclusion can easily fit the background for the entire epistle. Such a conclusion validates the evidence given in Acts and integrates the epistle itself into a more understandable whole.

---

[1] Yamauchi, Pre-Christian Gnosticism, pp. 37-38.

---

[1] Robert McLachlan Wilson, "Jewish Christianity and Gnosticism," Recherches De Science Religieuse 60 (April-June 1972):266, says that since Gnostic use of the Old Testament is so limited, the Gnostics appear to have known "little more than the book of Genesis."

While denying the basic contention of F. C. Baur that there was an antithesis between Pauline and Petrine Christianity in Corinth, research into the background of this epistle is dependent on much of Baur's study. His conception of the opposition as within the congregation, rather than external to it, has guided most subsequent interpretation. His reduction of factions from four to two has caused scholars to re-think the opposition in Corinth and to begin understanding the problem as one opposing front. Baur's insight into the Jewish nature of this opposition has dominated all subsequent research. Many have reacted against Baur and claimed Gentile dominance of the Corinthian church, but others have found Baur's identification to be essentially correct. Many commentators have sought to isolate the existence of Gnosticism as evident within the epistle, but some have qualified such existence as Gnosticism that has infiltrated through Judaism.

While it has not been the purpose of this dissertation to prove or disprove the existence of Gnosticism in Corinth at the time of I Corinthians, the study has shown that Paul was not wrestling with Gnosticism in his denunciation of πορνεία. His language, his allusions, his techniques, and his arguments do not reveal any developed Gnostic thought. In addition, while Gentiles were certainly a part of the congregation, the evidence points to a more Jewish-oriented group in background. This group would include pure Jews and proselyte Jews at varying degrees of persuasion, along with some Gentiles converted directly from paganism; and the problems developing in Corinth, particularly πορνεία, resulted from confusion in relating the Jewish heritage to the Christian faith. While Paul's use of Jewish terminology, allusions, and thought patterns disclose his own Jewish background, it also reveals in significant places the Jewish nature of the opposition. This understanding of a Hellenistic-Jewish milieu, then, should guide one's approach in interpretation of the entire epistle.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Biblical and Classical Sources

Aland, Kurt; Black, Matthew; Martini, Carlo M.; Metzger, Bruce; and Wikgren, Allen, eds. The Greek New Testament. 2nd ed. Stuttgart: Württemberg Bible Society, 1968.

Bate, Herbert Newell, trans. The Sibylline Oracles: Books III-V. Translations of Early Documents Series II: Hellenistic-Jewish Texts. London: S. P. C. K., 1918.

Casey, Robert Pierce, ed. and trans. The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria. Studies and Documents. Founded by Kirsopp Lake and Silva Lake. Edited by Jacob Geerlings. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934.

Charles, Robert Henry. The Greek Versions of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Edited from Nine MSS Together with the Variants of the Armenian and Slavonic Versions and Some Hebrew Fragments. Oxford: University Press, 1960.

Clarke, Ernest George. The Wisdom of Solomon. The Cambridge Bible Commentary: New English Bible. Cambridge: University Press, 1973.

Colson, Francis Henry, and Whitaker, George Herbert, trans. Philo. 10 vols. with Indices by J. W. Earp. The Loeb Classical Library. Founded by James Loeb. Edited by E. H. Warmington. Previously edited by T. E. Page, W. H. D. Rouse, E. Capps, and L. A. Post. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929-71.

Foerster, Werner, comp. Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts. Translation edited by Robert McLachlan Wilson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

Givensen, Søren, trans., intro., and comm. Apocryphon Johannis: The Coptic Text of the Apocryphon Johannis in the Nag Hammadi Codex II. Acta Theologica Danica. Vol. 5. Copenhagen: Prostant & Munksgaard, 1963.

Good News for Modern Man: New Testament in Today's English Version. 3rd ed. New York: American Bible Society, 1971.

Grant, Robert McQueen, ed. Gnosticism: An Anthology. London: Collins, 1961.

Grobel, Kendrick, trans. and comm. The Gospel of Truth. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960.

Gulick, Charles Burton, trans. Athenaeus: The Deipnosophists. 6 vols. The Loeb Classical Library. Edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page, and W. H. D. Rouse. London: William Heinemann, 1927-41.

The Jerusalem Bible: New Testament. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1968.

Jones, Horace Leonard, trans. The Geography of Strabo. 8 vols. Based in part upon the version of John Robert Sitlington Sterrett. The Loeb Classical Library. Edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page, and W. H. D. Rouse. London: William Heinemann, 1917-32.

Jones, William Henry Samuel, and Ormerod, H. A., trans. Pausanias: Description of Greece. 5 vols. With Indices and Illustrations by R. E. Wycherley. The Loeb Classical Library. Edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page, and W. H. D. Rouse. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918-71.

Macmahon, John Henry, trans. The Refutation of All Heresies by Hippolytus. With Fragments from his Commentaries on Various Books of Scripture translated by S. D. F. Salmond. Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Vol. 6. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1870.

New American Standard Bible. Reference ed. Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, 1971.

The New English Bible: New Testament. Cambridge: University Press, 1970.

New International Version of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973.

The New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: Revised Standard Version. 2nd ed. Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1971.

The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: King James Version. London: Collins, 1957.

Oulton, John Ernest Leonard, and Chadwick, Henry, trans. and eds. Alexandrian Christianity. The Library of Christian Classics. Edited by John Baille, John T. McNeill, and Henry P. van Dusen. Vol. 2. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954.

Roberts, Alexander, and Rambaut, W. H., trans. The Writings of Irenaeus. Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Vol. 5. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1874.

Thackeray, Henry St. John; Marcus, Ralph; and Feldman, Louis, trans. Josephus. 9 vols. The Loeb Classical Library. Founded by James Loeb. Edited by T. E. Page, E. Capps, L. A. Post, W. H. D. Rouse, and E. H. Warmington. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926-65.

Wilson, Robert McLachlan, trans. and comm. The Gospel of Philip. New York: Harper & Row, 1962.

Commentaries

Barrett, Charles Kingsley. A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Harper's New Testament Commentaries. General editor, Henry Chadwick. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.

Bruce, Frederick Fyvie. Commentary on the Book of Acts. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955.

________. I and II Corinthians. New Century Bible. Edited by Ronald E. Clements and Matthew Black. London: Marshall, Morgan, & Scott, 1971.

Cadbury, Henry Joel. The Book of Acts in History. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1955.

Calvin, John. The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians. Translated by John W. Fraser. Edited by David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance. Calvin's Commentaries. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1960.

Conzelmann, Hans. I Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Translated by James W. Leitch. Bibliography and references by James W. Dunkly. Edited by George W. MacRae. Hermeneia--A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Edited by Frank Moore Cross, Helmut Koester, et al. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.

Craig, Clarence Tucker. "The First Epistle to the Corinthians." In The Interpreter's Bible. 12 vols. General editor, George Arthur Buttrick. New York: Abingdon Press, 1952-57. 10:1-262.

Dodd, Charles Harold. The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel. Cambridge: University Press, 1960.

Dods, Marcus. The First Epistle to the Corinthians. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Sons, 1893.

Edwards, Thomas Charles. A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians. London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1885.

Ellicott, Charles J. A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. Andover: W. F. Draper, 1889.

Findlay, George Gillanders. "St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians." In The Expositor's Greek Testament. 5 vols. Edited by W. Robertson Nicoll. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1897-1910. 2: 727-953.

Fisher, Fred. Commentary on I and II Corinthians. Waco: Word Books, 1975.

Foakes-Jackson, Frederick John. The Acts of the Apostles. The Moffatt New Testament Commentary. Edited by James Moffatt. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1931.

Godet, Frédéric L. Commentary on St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. 2 vols. Translated by A. Cusin. Clark's Foreign Theological Library. New Series. Vols. 27 & 30. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889-90.

Goudge, Henry Leighton. The First Epistle to the Corinthians. 4th ed. Westminster Commentaries. Edited by Walter Lock. London: Methuen & Co., 1915.

Gould, Ezra Palmer. Commentary on the Epistles to the Corinthians. An American Commentary on the New Testament. Edited by Alvah Hovey. Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887.

Grosheide, Frederik Willem. Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. General editor, Frederick Fyvie Bruce. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972.

Héring, Jean. The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians. Translated by A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock. London: Epworth Press, 1970.

Hodge, Charles. An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950.

Hughes, Philip Edgcumbe. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. General editor, Frederick Fyvie Bruce. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973.

Kling, Christian Friedrich. The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. Translated by Daniel W. Poor. 4th ed. New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1872.

Lake, Kirsopp. The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul: Their Motive and Origin. London: Rivingtons, 1911.

Lenski, Richard Charles Henry. The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1946.

Lias, John James. The First Epistle to the Corinthians with Notes, Map, Introduction, and Appendices. Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges. General editor, J. J. S. Perowne. Cambridge: University Press, 1892.

________. The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians with Notes and Introduction. Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges. Cambridge: University Press, 1892.

Lightfoot, Joseph Barber. Notes on Epistles of St. Paul from Unpublished Commentaries. Edited posthumously by J. Rendel Harris. London: Macmillan & Co., 1895.

MacGregor, George Hogarth Carnaby. "The Acts of the Apostles." In The Interpreter's Bible. 12 vols. General editor, George Arthur Buttrick. New York: Abingdon Press, 1952-57. 9:1-352.

Meyer, Heinrich August Wilhelm. Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Parts V and VI: The Epistles to the Corinthians. Translated by D. Douglas Bannerman and David Hunter. Revised and edited by William P. Dickson. Translation revised and edited by William P. Dickson and William Stewart. 2 vols. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1878-81.

Moffatt, James. The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. The Moffatt New Testament Commentary. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938.

Montefiore, Hugh W. The Epistle to the Hebrews. Harper's New Testament Commentaries. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.

Morris, Leon. The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary. London: Tyndale Press, 1958.

Munck, Johannes. The Acts of the Apostles. The Anchor Bible. Revised by William F. Albright and C. S. Mann. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1967.

Olshausen, Hermann. Biblical Commentary on St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians. Translated by J. E. Cox. Clark's Foreign Theological Library. Vol. 20. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1885.

Parry, Reginald St. John. The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians in the Revised Version with Introduction and Notes. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. General editor, Reginald St. John Parry. Cambridge: University Press, 1916.

Plummer, Alfred, ed. The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. Cambridge: University Press, 1911.

Robertson, Archibald, and Plummer, Alfred. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Edited by Samuel Rolles Driver, Alfred Plummer, and Charles Augustus Briggs. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961.

Robinson, William Gordon. The Gospel and the Church in a Pagan World: A Study in I Corinthians. London: Independent Press, 1958.

Ropes, James Hardy. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James. The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Edited by Francis Brown and Alfred Plummer. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916.

Schmidt, John. Letter to Corinth. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947.

Strachan, Robert Harvey. The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. The Moffatt New Testament Commentary. Edited by James Moffatt. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935.

Thrall, Margaret E. The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians. The Cambridge Bible Commentary: New English Bible. Edited by P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, and J. W. Packer. Cambridge: University Press, 1965.

Vine, William Edwy. I Corinthians. London: Oliphants, 1951.

Weiss, Johannes. Der erste Korintherbrief. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910.

Williams, Charles Stephen Conway. A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles. Black's New Testament Commentaries. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1957.

Windisch, Hans Ludwig. Der zweite Korintherbrief. Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament. Founded by Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1924.

Reference Works

Arndt, William Frederick, and Gingrich, Felix Wilbur. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. Translated and adapted from the 4th revised German edition by Walter Bauer. Chicago: University Press, 1969.

Dana, H. E., and Mantey, Julius R. A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament. New York: Macmillan, 1957.

Dictionary of the Bible. Edited by James Hastings. Revised ed. S. v. "First Letter to the Corinthians," by Erich Dinkler.

Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971 ed. S.v. "Gnosticism," by David Flusser.

The Jewish Encyclopedia, 1916 ed. S.v. "Diaspora," by Theodore Reinach.

Liddell, Henry George, and Scott, Robert. A Greek-English Lexicon. 9th ed. Revised and augmented by Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.

Metzger, Bruce, comp. Index to Periodical Literature on the Apostle Paul. Vol. 1 of New Testament Tools and Studies. Edited by Bruce Metzger. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960.

Moule, Charles Francis Digby. An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek. Cambridge: University Press, 1953.

Moulton, James Hope, and Milligan, George. The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930.

New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967 ed. S.v. "Gnosis, Christian," by George W. MacRae.

The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974 ed. S.v. "Gnosticism," by Robert McQueen Grant.

Robertson, Archibald Thomas. A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research. New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919.

________. Word Pictures in the New Testament. 6 vols. New York: Harper & Bros., 1930-33.

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 1964-74 ed.

Vincent, Marvin Richardson. Word Studies in the New Testament. Wilmington, Del.: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1972.

Vine, William Edwy. An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers. Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1966.

Other Books

Alexander, Archibald. The Ethics of St. Paul. Glasgow: James Maclehose & Sons, 1910.

UMI

Andrews, Mary Edith. The Ethical Teaching of Paul: A Study in Origin. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934.

Baird, William. The Corinthian Church: A Biblical Approach to Urban Culture. New York: Abingdon Press, 1964.

Baron, Salo Wittmayer. A Social and Religious History of the Jews. 2nd ed. rev. 16 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1952-76.

Bartsch, Hans Werner, ed. Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate. 2 vols. Translated by Reginald H. Fuller. London: S. P. C. K., 1953-62.

Bauer, Walter. Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity. Translated by a team from the Philadelphia seminar on Christian origins and edited by Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971.

Baur, Ferdinand Christian. Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben. Edited by Klaus Scholder. 5 vols. Holzboog: Stuttgart & Bad Canstatt, 1963-75.

________. The Church History of the First Three Centuries. 3rd ed. 2 vols. Translated by Allan Menzies. London: Williams & Norgate, 1878-79.

________. Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine: A Contribution to a Critical History of Primitive Christianity. 2nd ed. 2 vols. Revised and edited by Eduard Zeller. Translated by Allan Menzies. London: Williams & Norgate, 1873-75.

Beare, Francis Wright. St. Paul and His Letters. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1962.

Bell, Harold Idris, ed. Jews and Christians in Egypt: The Jewish Troubles in Alexandria and the Athanasian Controversy. With three Coptic texts edited by W. E. Crum. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972.

Bentwich, Norman. Hellenism. Movements in Judaism. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1919.

Best, Ernest. One Body in Christ: A Study in the Relationship of the Church to Christ in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul. London: S. P. C. K., 1955.

Bevan, Edwyn Robert. Hellenism and Christianity. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1921.

Bianchi, Ugo, ed. The Origins of Gnosticism: Colloquium of Messina 13-18 April 1966/ Le Origini dello Gnosticismo: Colloquio di Messina 13-18 Aprile 1966. Studies in the History of Religions: Supplements to Numen. Vol. 12. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967.

Black, Matthew. The Scrolls and Christian Origins: Studies in the Jewish Background of the New Testament. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961.

Boney, Mary. Paul's Use of the Old Testament. Master's thesis. Columbia University, 1956.

Bornkamm, Günther. Paul. Paulus. Translated by D. M. G. Stalker. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

Bousset, Wilhelm. Hauptprobleme der Gnosis. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1907.

Bultmann, Rudolf. Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting. Translated by Reginald H. Fuller. London: Thames & Hudson, 1956.

________. Theology of the New Testament. 2 vols. Translated by Kendrick Grobel. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951-55.

Burkitt, Francis Crawford. Church and Gnosis: A Study of Christian Thought and Speculation in the Second Century. Cambridge: University Press, 1932.

Cullmann, Oscar. The Early Church: Studies in Early Christian History and Theology. Edited by A. J. B. Higgins. Translated by A. J. B. Higgins and S. Godman. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956.

Cumont, Franz. The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism. With an Introductory Essay by Grant Showerman. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1911.

Daniélou, Jean. Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture. Translated, edited, and with a postscript by John Austin Baker. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973.

Daube, David. The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism. London: Athlone Press, 1956.

Davies, William David. Christian Origins and Judaism. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1962.

________. Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.

Davies, William David, and Daube, David, eds. in honor of Charles Harold Dodd. The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology. Cambridge: University Press, 1956.

Dean, John Taylor. Saint Paul and Corinth. London: Lutterworth Press, 1947.

DeBoer, Willis Peter. The Imitation of Paul: An Exegetical Study. Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1962.

Deissmann, Gustaf Adolf. Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World. Translated by Lionel R. M. Strachan. New York: George H. Doran Co., 1927.

________. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History. 2nd ed. rev. Translated by William E. Wilson. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1926.

Derwacter, Frederick Milton. Preparing the Way for Paul: The Proselyte Movement in Later Judaism. New York: Macmillan, 1930.

Dibelius, Martin. A Fresh Approach to the New Testament and Early Christian Literature. London: I. Nicholson & Watson, 1936.

Dinkler, Erich, ed. Zeit und Geschichte: Dankesgabe an Rudolf Bultmann zum 80. Geburtstag. Tübingen: Mohr, 1964.

Doresse, Jean. The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics: An Introduction to the Gnostic Coptic Manuscripts Discovered at Chenoboskion. Translated by Philip Mairet. London: Hollis & Carter, 1960.

Effird, J. M., ed. The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays. Durham: Duke University Press, 1972.

Ellis, Edward Earle. Paul's Use of the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957.

Enslin, Morton Scott. The Ethics of Paul. New York: Harper & Bros., 1930.

Epstein, Louis M. Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism. With an Introduction by Ari Kiev. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1968.

Fairweather, William. The Background of the Epistles. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1935.

Farmer, William Reuben; Moule, Charles Francis Digby; and Niebuhr, Richard R., eds. Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox. Cambridge: University Press, 1967.

Flanders, Henry Jackson, Jr.; Crapps, Robert Wilson; and Smith, David Anthony. People of the Covenant: An Introduction to the Old Testament. 2nd ed. New York: Ronald Press Co., 1973.

Ford, Josephine Massingberd. A Trilogy on Wisdom and Celibacy. The Cardinal O'Hara Series: Studies and Research in Christian Theology at Notre Dame. Vol. 4. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967.

Fuller, Reginald H. The New Testament in Current Study. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962.

Furnish, Victor Paul. Theology and Ethics in Paul. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968.

Gärtner, Bertil. The Temple and the Community in Qumran and in the New Testament: A Comparative Study in the Temple Symbolism of the Qumran Texts and the New Testament. Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas Monograph Series, No. 1. Cambridge: University Press, 1965.

Georgi, Dieter. Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief: Studien zur religionsën Propaganda in der Spätantike. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964.

Goodenough, Erwin R. An Introduction to Philo Judaeus. 2nd ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962.

________. Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period. 13 vols. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953-68.

Goppelt, Leonhard. Jesus, Paul and Judaism: An Introduction to New Testament Theology. Translated and edited by Edward Schroeder. New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1964.

Grant, Frederick Clifton. Ancient Judaism and the New Testament. New York: Macmillan, 1959.

Grant, Robert McQueen. Gnosticism and Early Christianity. 2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1966.

Groningen, G. van. First Century Gnosticism: Its Origins and Motifs. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967.

Guignebert, Charles Alfred Honoré. The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus. Translated by S. H. Hooke. The History of Civilization. Edited by C. K. Ogden. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1939.

Guthrie, Donald. New Testament Introduction. Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970.

Haardt, Robert. Gnosis: Character and Testimony. Translated by J. F. Hendry. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971.

Hatch, Edwin. The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity. New York: Harper & Bros., 1957.

Helmbold, Andrew K. The Nag Hammadi Texts and the Bible. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967.

Hengel, Martin. Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period. 2 vols. Translated by John Bowden. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974.

Henshaw, Thomas. New Testament Literature in the Light of Modern Scholarship. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952.

Hodgson, Peter C., ed. and trans. Ferdinand Christian Baur on the Writing of Church History. A Library of Protestant Thought. Edited by John Dillenberger et al. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Hunter, Archibald Macbride. Paul and His Predecessors. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961.

Hurd, John Coolidge, Jr. The Origin of I Corinthians. New York: Seabury Press, 1965.

Johnson, Aubrey Rodway. The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel. 2nd ed. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964.

Johnson, Sherman E., ed. The Joy of Study: Papers on New Testament and Related Subjects Presented to Honor Frederick Clifton Grant. New York: Macmillan Co., 1951.

UMI

Jonas, Hans. The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity. 2nd ed. rev. Boston: Beacon Press, 1963.

Käsemann, Ernst. Perspectives on Paul. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971.

Kennedy, Harry Angus Alexander. St. Paul and the Mystery Religions. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1913.

Kingsland, William. The Gnosis or Ancient Wisdom in the Christian Scriptures: or, The Wisdom in a Mystery. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1937.

Klassen, William,and Snyder, Graydon F., eds. Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper. New York: Harper & Bros., 1962.

Klausner, Joseph. From Jesus to Paul. Translated by William F. Stinespring. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1944.

Knox, John. Chapters in a Life of Paul. New York: Abingdon, 1950.

Knox, Wilfred Lawrence. St. Paul and the Church of Jerusalem. Cambridge: University Press, 1925.

________. St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles. Cambridge: University Press, 1961.

________. Some Hellenistic Elements in Primitive Christianity: The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy--1942. London: Oxford University Press, 1944.

Kümmel, Werner Georg, re-ed. Introduction to the New Testament. Founded by Paul Feine and Johannes Behm. Translated by A. J. Mattill, Jr. 14th rev. ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966.

Laeuchli, Samuel. The Language of Faith: An Introduction to the Semantic Dilemma of the Early Church. New York: Abingdon Press, 1962.

Lightfoot, Joseph Barber. Biblical Essays. London: Macmillan & Co., 1893.

Lütgert, William. Freiheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister in Korinth: Ein Beitrag zur Charackteristik der Christus Partei. Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie. Vol. 12. Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1908.

UMI

Macgregor, George Hogarth Carnaby, and Purdy, Alexander Converse. Jew and Greek, Tutors unto Christ: The Jewish and Hellenistic Background of the New Testament. The International Library of Christian Knowledge. Edited by William Adams Brown and Bertram Lee Woolf. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.

Mansel, Henry Longueville. The Gnostic Heresies of the First and Second Centuries. Edited by J. B. Lightfoot. London: John Murray, 1875.

Manson, Thomas Walter. Studies in the Gospels and Epistles. Edited by Matthew Black. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962.

Marxen, Willi. Introduction to the New Testament: An Approach to Its Problems. Translated by G. Buswell. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968.

Mead, George Robert Stow. Fragments of a Faith Forgotten: The Gnostics, A Contribution to the Study of the Origins of Christianity. With an Introduction by Kenneth Rexroth. New Hyde Park: University Books, 1960.

Moore, George Foot. Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim. 3 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927-30.

Morgan, Robert, ed., trans., and intro. The Nature of New Testament Theology: The Contribution of William Wrede and Adolf Schlatter. Studies in Biblical Theology. 2nd series. Edited by Peter R. Ackroyd, James Barr, C. F. Evan, Floyd V. Filson, and C. F. D. Moule. London: SCM Press, 1973.

Munck, Johannes. Paul and the Salvation of Mankind. Translated by Frank Clarke. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959.

Neill, Stephen. The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1961: The Firth Lectures, 1962. London: Oxford University Press, 1964.

Oesterley, William Oscar Emil. The Jews and Judaism During the Greek Period: The Background of Christianity. New York: Macmillan, 1941.

Oostendorf, Derk William. Another Jesus: A Gospel of Jewish Christian Superiority in II Corinthians. Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1967.

Pagels, Elaine Hiesey. The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.

Pearson, Birger Albert. The Pneumatikos-Psuchikos Terminology in I Corinthians: A Study in the Theology of the Corinthian Opponents of Paul and Its Relation to Gnosticism. Missoula, Mont.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1968.

Pfeiffer, Robert Henry. History of New Testament Times With an Introduction to the Apocrypha. New York: Harper & Bros., 1949.

Pfleiderer, Otto. The Influence of the Apostle Paul on the Development of Christianity. Translated by J. Frederick Smith. London: Williams & Norgate, 1885.

Puech, Henri Charles; Quispel, Gilles; and Unnik, Willem Cornelius van. The Jung Codex: A Newly Recovered Gnostic Papyrus. Translated and edited by F. L. Cross. London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1955.

Quispel, Gilles. Gnostic Studies I. Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaelogogisch Instituut in het Nabije Oosten, 1974.

Ramsay, William Mitchell. The Church in the Roman Empire Before A. D. 70. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1897.

________. The Cities of St. Paul: Their Influence on His Life and Thought. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967.

________. Pauline and Other Studies in Early Christian History. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1906.

________. Pictures of the Apostolic Church: Studies in the Book of Acts. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1959.

________. St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1895.

Reitzenstein, Richard. Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen. Leipzig: Teubner, 1927.

Richardson, Peter. Israel in the Apostolic Church. London: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

Robinson, Henry Schroeder. The Urban Development of Ancient Corinth. Revised ed. Athens: American School of Classical Studies, 1965.

Robinson, Henry Wheeler. The Christian Doctrine of Man. 3rd ed. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1926.

Robinson, James McConkey, and Koester, Helmut. Trajectories through Early Christianity. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971.

Robinson, John Arthur Thomas. The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology. Studies in Biblical Theology. No. 5. London: SCM Press, 1952.

Russell, David Syme. The Jews from Alexander to Herod. The New Clarendon Bible: Old Testament. Vol. 5. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Rylands, Louis Gordon. The Beginnings of Gnostic Christianity. London: Watts & Co., 1940.

Scharlemann, Martin Henry. Qumran and Corinth. New York: Bookman Associates, 1962.

Schlatter, Adolf von. The Church in the New Testament Period. Translated by Paul P. Levertoff. London: S. P. C. K., 1961.

________. Die korinthische Theologie. Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie. Vol. 18. Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1914.

________. Paulus der Bote Jesu: Eine Deutung seiner Brief an die Korinther. Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1969.

Schmithals, Walter. Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians. Translated by John E. Steely. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971.

________. Paul and the Gnostics. Translated by John E. Steely. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972.

Schoeps, Hans-Joachim. Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church. Translated by Douglas R. A. Hare. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969.

________. Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History. Translated by H. Knight. London: Lutterworth Press, 1961.

Scholem, Gershom G. Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism. New York: Schocken, 1951.

Scholer, David M. Nag Hammadi Bibliography 1948-1969. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971.

Schottroff, Luise. Der Glaubende und die frindliche Welt: Beobachtungen zun gnostischen Dualismis und Seiner Bedeutung für Paulus und das Johannesevangelium. Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970.

Schweitzer, Albert. The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle. Translated by W. Montgomery. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1953.

________. Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History. Translated by W. Montgomery. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1912.

Selby, Donald Joseph. Toward the Understanding of St. Paul. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962.

Sevenster, Jan Nicolaas, and Unnik, Willem Cornelius van, eds. Studia Paulina in Honorem Johannis de Zwaan Septuagenarii. Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn N. V., 1953.

Shiel, James. Greek Thought and the Rise of Christianity. Problems and Perspectives in History. Edited by Hugh F. Kearney. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1968.

Stacey, Walter David. The Pauline View of Man in Relation to Its Judaic and Hellenistic Background. London: Macmillan, 1956.

Stendahl, Krister. The Scrolls and the New Testament. New York: Harper, 1957.

Story, Geoffrey L., Jr. The Valentinian (Gnostic) Use of the Letters of Paul. Ph.D. Dissertation: Northwestern University, 1968.

Tarn, William. Hellenistic Civilisation. 3rd ed. revised by author and G. T. Griffith. London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1952.

Tcherikover, Avigdor. Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961.

Thackeray, Henry St. John. The Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought. London: Macmillan & Co., 1900.

Turner, Henry Ernest William. The Pattern of Christian Truth: A Study in the Relations Between Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church. London: Mowbray Co., 1954.

UMI

Turner, Henry Ernest William, and Montefiore, Hugh W. Thomas and the Evangelists. Studies in Biblical Theology. London: SCM Press, 1962.

Unnik, Willem Cornelius van. Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings: A Preliminary Survey of the Nag Hammadi Find. London: SCM Press, 1960.

Weber, Max. Ancient Judaism. Translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1952.

Weinel, Heinrich. St. Paul, The Man and His Work. Translated by G. A. Bienemann. Edited by W. D. Morrison. London: Williams & Norgate, 1906.

Weiss, Johannes. The History of Primitive Christianity. Completed after author's death by Rudolf Knopf. Translated by F. C. Grant, A. H. Forster, P. S. Kramer, and S. E. Johnson. Edited by Frederick C. Grant. 2 vols. New York: Wilson-Erickson, 1937.

Wernle, Paul. The Beginnings of Christianity. Translated by G. A. Bienemann. Edited by W. D. Morrison. 2 vols. London: Williams & Norgate, 1903-1904.

Whiteley, Denys Edward Hugh. The Theology of St. Paul. Oxford: Blackwell, 1964.

Widengren, Geo. The Gnostic Attitude. Translated and edited by Birger Albert Pearson. Santa Barbara: University of California Institute of Religious Studies, 1973.

Wikgren, Allen, ed. Early Christian Origins: Studies in Honor of Harold R. Willoughby. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961.

Wilckens, Ulrich. Weisheit und Torheit: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu 1. Kor. 1 und 2. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959.

Wilson, John Henry. A Comparative Study of Pauline and Early Gnostic Literature Demonstrating that Paul was not a Proto-Gnostic. Ph.D. Dissertation: Michigan St. University, 1969.

Wilson, Robert McLachlan. Gnosis and the New Testament. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968.

________. The Gnostic Problem: A Study of the Relations Between Hellenistic Judaism and the Gnostic Heresy. London: A. R. Mowbray, 1964.

Wolfson, Harry Austryn. Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. 2 vols. Structure and Growth of Philosophic Systems From Plato to Spinoza. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947.

Wrede, William. Paul. Translated by Edward Lummis. With a Preface by J. Estin Carpenter. Lexington: American Theological Library Association, 1962.

Yamauchi, Edwin M. Gnostic Ethics and Mandaean Origins. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970.

________. Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Study of the Proposed Evidences. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973.

Zahn, Theodor. An Introduction to the New Testament. Translated by M. W. Jacobus et al. 3 vols. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909.

Articles

Andrews, Mary Edith. "The Party of Christ in Corinth." Anglican Theological Review 19 (1937):17-29.

Bacon, Benjamin Wisner. "The Apostolic Decree against πορνεία." The Expositor, 8th Series 7 (1914): 40-61

Bammel, Von Ernst. "Herkunft und Funktion der Traditionselemente in 1. Kor. 15, 1-11." Theologische Zeitschrift 11 (Nov.-Dec. 1955):401-19.

Barrett, Charles Kingsley. "Christianity at Corinth." Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 46 (1964): 269-97.

________. "Paul's Opponents in II Corinthians." New Testament Studies 17 (1971):233-54.

________. "Things Sacrificed to Idols." New Testament Studies 11 (1965):138-53.

Barth, M. "Chapter on the Church, the Body of Christ: Interpretation of I Corinthians." Interpretation 12 (April 1958):131-56.

Baur, Ferdinand Christian. "Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des paulinischen und petrinschen Christentums in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom." Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie 5 (1831):61-206.

Benko, Stephen. "The Libertine Gnostic Sect of the Phibionites According to Epiphanius." Vigiliae Christianae 21 (1967):103-119.

Bernard, John Henry. "The Connexion Between the Fifth and Sixth Chapters of I Corinthians." The Expositor, 7th Series 3 (1907):433-43.

Broneer, Oscar. "Corinth, Center of St. Paul's Missionary Work in Greece." The Biblical Archaeologist 14 (1951):78-96.

Buchanan, George Wesley. "The Role of Purity in the Structure of the Essene Sect." Revue de Qumran 15 (1963):397-406.

Bultmann, Rudolf. "Gnosis." Journal of Theological Studies 3 (April 1952):10-26.

Caird, George Bradford. "Everything to Everyone: The Theology of the Corinthian Epistles." Interpretation 13 (Oct. 1959):387-99.

Cleary, Patrick. "The Epistles to the Corinthians." The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 12 (1950):10-33.

Conzelmann, Hans. "On the Analysis of the Confessional Formula in I Corinthians 15:3-5." Translated by Mathias Rissi. Interpretation 20 (1966):15-25.

Daube, David. "Concessions to Sinfulness in Jewish Law." Journal of Jewish Studies 10 (1959):1-13.

Dickinson, A. J. "The Genetic History of 1 and 2 Corinthians: Studies Constructive and Critical." Review and Expositor 14 (1917):32-39.

Everett, Henry. "Outstanding Features of I Corinthians." Review and Expositor 25 (1928): 355-69.

Filson, Floyd Vivian. "Symposium: Studies in Gnosticism: Gnosticism in the New Testament." McCormick Quarterly 18 (May 1965):3-9.

Ford, Josephine Massingberd. "The First Epistle to the Corinthians or the First Epistle to the Hebrews?" The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 28 (1966):402-16.

Godet, Frédéric. "The First Epistle to the Corinthians." The Expositor, 3rd Series 2 (1885): 70-80, 161-77.

Grant, Robert McQueen. "Gnostic Origins and the Basilidians of Irenaeus." Vigiliae Christianae 13 (July 1959): 121-25.

Hicks, R. I. "Body Political and Body Ecclesiastical." Journal of Bible and Religion 31 (Jan. 1963):29-35.

Julicher, Adolf. "Die Jungfrauen im ersten Korintherbrief." Protestanische Monatshefte 22 (1918):97-119.

Kempthorne, R. "Incest and the Body of Christ: A Study of I Cor. 6:12-20." New Testament Studies 14 (1968): 568-74.

Klijn, A. F. J. "Study of Jewish Christianity." New Testament Studies 20 (July 1974):419-31.

Knox, John. "The Pauline Chronology." Journal of Biblical Literature 58 (1939):15-29.

McDonald, W. A. "Archaelogy and St. Paul's Journeys in Greeks Lands: Part III, Corinth." The Biblical Archaeologist 5 (1942):36-48.

McRae, George W. "Review of Gnosticism in Corinth, by Walter Schmithals." Interpretation 26 (1972): 489-91.

Manson, Thomas Walter. "The Message of the Epistles: I Corinthians." Expository Times 44 (1932-33): 500-504.

________. "St. Paul in Ephesus: (3) The Corinthian Correspondence." Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 26 (1941):101-120.

Melconian, V. D. "First Corinthians." Interpretation 7 (1953):62-77.

Mounce, Robert H. "Continuity of the Primitive Tradition: Some Pre-Pauline Elements in I Corinthians." Interpretation 13 (Oct. 1959):417-24.

Munck, Johannes. "The New Testament and Gnosticism." Studia Theologica 15 (1961):181-95.

Munn, G. L. "Historical Background of First Corinthians." Southwestern Journal of Theology 3 (Oct. 1960): 5-14.

Nock, Arthur Darby. "Gnosticism." Harvard Theological Review 57 (1964):255-79.

Pearson, Birger Albert. "Did the Gnostics Curse Jesus?" Journal of Biblical Literature 86 (Sept. 1967): 301-305.

Pherigo, L. P. "Paul and the Corinthian Church." Journal of Biblical Literature 68 (1949):341-51.

________. "Rival Leadership in Corinth." Journal of Bible and Religion 19 (Oct. 1951):197-99.

Porter, Frank Chamberlin. "Primitive Christianity and Judaism: A Symposium: Part A: The Problem of Things New and Old in the Beginnings of Christianity." Journal of Biblical Literature 48 (1929):1-23.

Rees, W. "Corinth in St. Paul's Time." Scripture 2 (1947):71-76, 105-111.

Robinson, James McConkey. "Basic Shifts in German Theology." Interpretation 16 (1962):76-97.

________. "The Coptic Gnostic Library Today." New Testament Studies 14 (April 1968):356-401.

Scharlemann, Martin Henry. "Review of Weisheit und Torheit by Ulrich Wilkens." Journal of Biblical Literature 79 (1960):189-90.

Schoedel, William R. "The Rediscovery of Gnosis: A Study of the Background to the New Testament." Interpretation 16 (Oct. 1962):387-401.

Scroggs, Robin. "Paul: Chauvinist or Liberationist?" The Christian Century, March 15, 1972, p. 307.

Serkland, J. D. "Dissension at Corinth: An Exploration." Lexington Theological Quarterly 8 (Jan. 1973):27-36.

Slater, W. J. "How Paul Preached the Gospel at Corinth." The Expository Times 3 (1891-92):406-409.

Summers, Ray. "First Corinthians: An Exposition." Review and Expositor 57 (Oct. 1960):398-421.

Wilson, Robert McLachlan. "How Gnostic were the Corinthians?" New Testament Studies 19 (Oct. 1972):65-74.

________. "Jewish Christianity and Gnosticism." Recherches De Science Religieuse 60 (April-June 1972):261-72.

________. "Review of Die Gnosis in Korinth by Walter Schmithals." Scottish Journal of Theology 15 (1962):324-27.

________. "Some Recent Studies in Gnosticism." New Testament Studies 6 (Oct. 1959):32-44.

Wolfson, Harry Austryn. "Philo on Jewish Citizenship in Alexandria." Journal of Biblical Literature 63 (1944):165-68.